

AMERICAN REVOLUTION BICENTENNIAL  
1776-1976



# Emigrant Trails of Southeastern Idaho

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This publication has been endorsed  
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and the Idaho Historical Society.

FRONT COVER:  
Silent City of Rocks  
Cassia County (BLM Photo)

## Emigrant Trails of Southeastern Idaho

OREGON TRAIL  
HUDSPETH'S CUTOFF  
CALIFORNIA TRAIL  
SALT LAKE CUTOFF

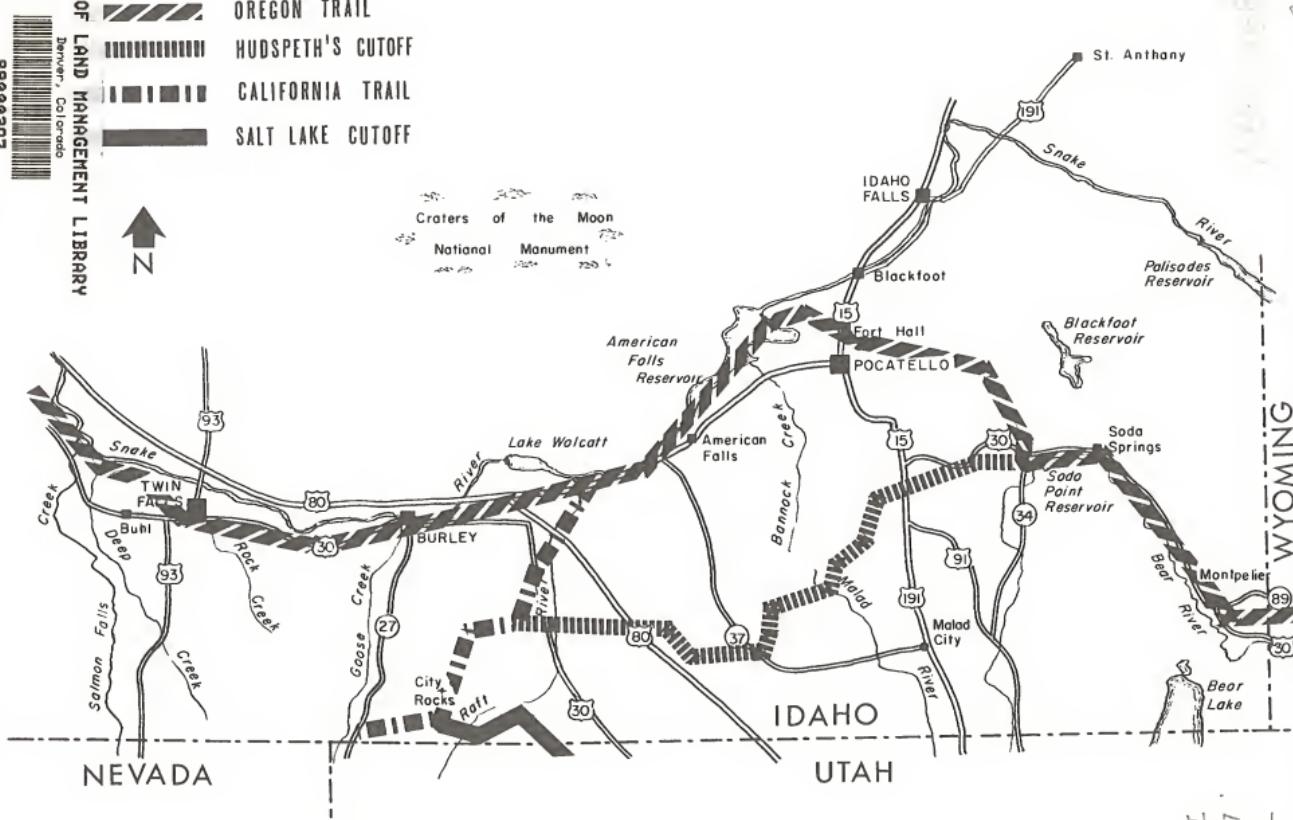
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1976

## Introduction

The generalized routes of the emigrant trails in southeastern Idaho have always been known. The purpose of this volume is to show more specifically where the trails are, and also how the trail appeared in the eyes (and diaries) of those who passed through.

The location of the emigrant trails was determined after the examination and evaluation of the following criteria, listed in the approximate order of confidence:

(1) Diary accounts, both published and unpublished, of emigrant travellers in the 19th Century. These were taken into the field and the most descriptive and useful ones were extracted. Over 200 were examined, and almost 100 were used.

(2) Aerial photographs, the earlier the date, the better. Photographs have the power to stop history, and those of southeastern Idaho, taken before the coming of the deep plowing, have been especially important in determining the positions of the trails.

(3) Surveys. Southeastern Idaho was surveyed by the General Land Office in the latter part of the 19th Century, and the surveyors' plats and notebooks sometimes show the old roads and trails.

(4) Actual remaining track in the field. The distinctive, one-rut trails of wagons and teams are still present in some parts of the area, as changes are very slow. The effects of the disturbance of the soil, even after the tracks are gone, often can be detected in the vegetation.

(5) Stained rocks. In some instances, where the iron-rimmed wagon wheels rolled over even harder rocks, some of the iron was scratched off, and in time rusted, so that very distinctive rust-stained rocks may show that wagons passed by.

(6) Artifacts of the trail. Human-made items are fast becoming rare along the trails, but occasionally some are still found, among them being ox-shoes, bottles, hand-wrought metal, etc.

(7) The oral tradition. There are still many "old-timers" around who can recall stories of the original settlers in the area. The original settlers had seen the nature of the trail when they arrived. The oral tradition is fast leaving us and memories, like trails, grow dim.

In order to make the diary reading flow easier, some editorial liberties have been taken. Punctuation and capitalization have been modernized. Some words, those not dealing with the trail itself, have been omitted, and three dots inserted in their place. Some words have been added, both to make the text flow easier and to show the reader the correct term being used today; such words are in brackets. Most have been used for geographic features. Spelling and abbreviations presented a special problem. Some of the misspellings are obvious in their meaning, and the speller may have been just plain tired; some of the spelling is distinctly different, and even quaint. In most cases, however, the spelling has been updated so as not to distract the reader from the main purpose of the work — the trail. It is very easy to get mentally sidetracked by the quaint grammar of the time.

The geographic boundaries of the region are easy to determine. Southeastern Idaho is bounded on the east by Wyoming, on the south by Utah, on the west by Salmon Falls Creek, and on the north by the Snake River. Where the Snake River turns, the northern boundary continues along an east-west trending line a bit north of the Bingham-Bannock County line.

Time boundaries are not so obvious. By emigrant trails are meant those trails used by persons passing through on the way to somewhere else. This period began after the fur trappers had largely come and gone, and before the Mormon people moved into the area — from 1834 (when Fort Hall was founded) to 1860 (when Franklin was settled).

The person knowledgeable in southeastern Idaho history will recognize immediately that not all of the known trails are included. The reasons are threefold: (1) not all were chiefly emigrant trails, such as the pack trails leading from Salt Lake City northward to Fort Hall via the Malad River, Dairy Creek, and Bannock Creek; (2) not all are "trails" in the sense that they were made by persons going but one way and using the best routes available. The Lander trail is not a trail in this sense, but a road, surveyed and constructed for travel; (3) some were not used much during the emigrant period, and little is known of them. An example is the Salt Lake City to Oregon trail, which turned northward from the Salt Lake Cutoff, descended the Raft River, and joined the Oregon trail somewhere near Marsh Creek.

It is important that the person reading others' diaries realize that the early travellers did not have the benefit of maps, so that the names they used for features are often confusing. Some made up their own names for features, others were mistaken about where they were, and others were not mistaken about where they were, but later settlers changed names from those used by the diarists. These name problems are particularly apparent when used for bodies of water.



## The Crossroads of the Pioneers

After Thomas Jefferson purchased Louisiana for the United States in 1803, he authorized the Lewis and Clark expedition to investigate the new lands, and to determine if an overland route to the Pacific Ocean was feasible. Lewis and Clark entered northern Idaho on August 12, 1805, and the history of the state begins, at least for the white people. The Indians were already here, but little is known of their earlier history. The expedition crossed the state, went to the Pacific and returned the same way. They were still on their way home to St. Louis on the Missouri River when they encountered the vanguard of the next era to Idaho — the fur trappers.

The names of the first white persons in southeastern Idaho are not known for certain, although they possibly arrived in 1806 and certainly in 1810 or 1811. Andrew Henry entered Idaho from Montana in the fall of 1810 and spent the winter of 1810-1811 on the Snake River, in Fort Henry, near what is now St. Anthony. While there, he and his men "trapped the country," and it seems reasonable that they entered southeastern Idaho, barely two days ride to the south — but there is no record. In the spring of 1811 they abandoned Fort Henry. We are told that some went home to the north, via the Missouri River, some went east over the mountains, and some went south "to the Spanish possessions." These unknown trappers are the first white men reported to have entered southeastern Idaho.

Henry was not yet home at St. Louis before he encountered the Astorians coming overland, guided by Wilson Price Hunt. They were enroute to the Pacific Ocean to meet with others who went by sea. Some of Henry's men joined the Astorians and guided them back to Fort Henry. Hunt built canoes and left Fort Henry, going south-westward down the Snake River, and entered southeastern Idaho on October 23, 1811 — the first date in southeastern Idaho history. Hunt arrived at the Snake River.

Robert Stuart, another Astorian, led a party back eastward along the Snake in 1812, crossed Salmon Falls Creek, and white man re-entered southeastern Idaho. The party continued up the Snake River; they then continued eastward and northward out of southeastern Idaho. Irving, in 1868, relates with great skill the story of the Astorians.

In 1813, Astor's company was sold to the Canadian North West Company, and its

trappers entered the region shortly thereafter. The Hudson Bay Company purchased the North West Company in 1821, and soon numerous, well-organized Snake River Country Expeditions were formed. Numerous independent trappers also were in the region, and in 1824 American trappers gave competition to the British. The Bear River Valley and the Snake-Portneuf River junction region were favorite wintering sites for the trappers. There is no doubt that these trappers wandered all over southeastern Idaho. They travelled by pack horse and could go everywhere that a beaver could go. Few left journals, and none left anything permanent. There were as yet no wheels in the country. Chittenden (1902) can give the reader a splendid story of the fur trappers in southeastern Idaho.

In 1834, the passage into a new era began. Nathaniel Wyeth, unable to dispose of trade goods to the trappers in Wyoming as planned, came on to the junction of the Portneuf and Snake Rivers and constructed Fort Hall, with a view toward trading with the Indians and free trappers. With him were missionaries on the way to a macedonian call from Indians in Oregon. As the fur trade waned, and competition increased, Wyeth sold his Fort Hall to the Hudson Bay Company, and shortly thereafter, the new era began — that of the emigrants.

At first, there were but a few missionaries, then missionaries and wives, and as soon as it was shown that wheels could cross the country, the flood of emigrants began to pass through southeastern Idaho. They followed the old trails that the trappers knew so well — being guided in many cases by the trappers themselves, now that the fur trade business was wanng.

The tide swelled to the point that England soon abandoned her interest in Oregon altogether, and by the end of 1849 Oregon was a Territory and included what is now Idaho, and all of the main trails had been used by emigrants.

The trails continued to be used as emigrants passed through southeastern Idaho on the way to Oregon and California, and soon permanent settlers appear in the region. Franklin was founded in 1860, and a new era began, that of the pioneer.

*"Remember, remember always, that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants."*

President Franklin D. Roosevelt



## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is designed to enable the reader to determine where the various emigrant trails in southeastern Idaho were and where they can be found. He also will be able to read what the travellers themselves wrote when they were on that part of the trail.

The trails are drawn to scale on maps at an inch to one mile. The routes are shown as well as the scale and historical research will permit. Each map shows a length of trail approximately ten miles long, in a corridor of about two miles wide.

The trails have been placed into two categories; (1) the main routes, solid red lines, travelled by most of the emigrants, and (2) secondary, or alternate routes, open red lines, taken by only a few of the travellers. Where tracks remain to be seen, the lines are continuous; where tracks have been removed by agriculture or road building; or by inundation, the lines are dashed.

The colors of the background are designed to give the reader the status of the land ownership over which the trails pass, i.e., private, Indian, federal or state.

The numbers along the route can be identified on the accompanying text, and one can read what the diarist wrote while at the location. The diarist is identified in parentheses at the end of the statement, and the complete diary citation can be found at the end of the book in references cited. All of the diary accounts are in script letters.

The various emigrant trails in southeastern Idaho are shown on the accompanying index map, and the maps which contain specific portions are shown following the introduction to each individual trail.

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## MAP LEGEND

 MAIN TRAIL Still Visible	 MAIN TRAIL Not Visible	 MAIN HIGHWAY	 NATIONAL RESOURCE LANDS
 SECONDARY TRAIL Still Visible	 SECONDARY TRAIL Not Visible	 SECONDARY ROAD	 NATIONAL FOREST LANDS
		 RAILROAD	 STATE LANDS
		 SPRING	 INDIAN RESERVATION
(7) NARRATIVE REFERENCE NUMBER	0	 PERENNIAL STREAM	 BANKHEAD-JONES (Mng'd by U.S.F.S.)
	1	2	3
		4	
		MILES	



Typical wagon used by travelers  
on the Oregon Trail. Photo courtesy  
Idaho Historical Society.

## OREGON TRAIL

This trail was first used by emigrants in the latter part of the fourth decade of the 19th Century. Missionaries travelling westward to minister to the Oregon Indians followed the trails made by the trappers (who probably followed trails made by the Indians), and once it was shown that wheeled vehicles could pass through the area, the emigration began in earnest.

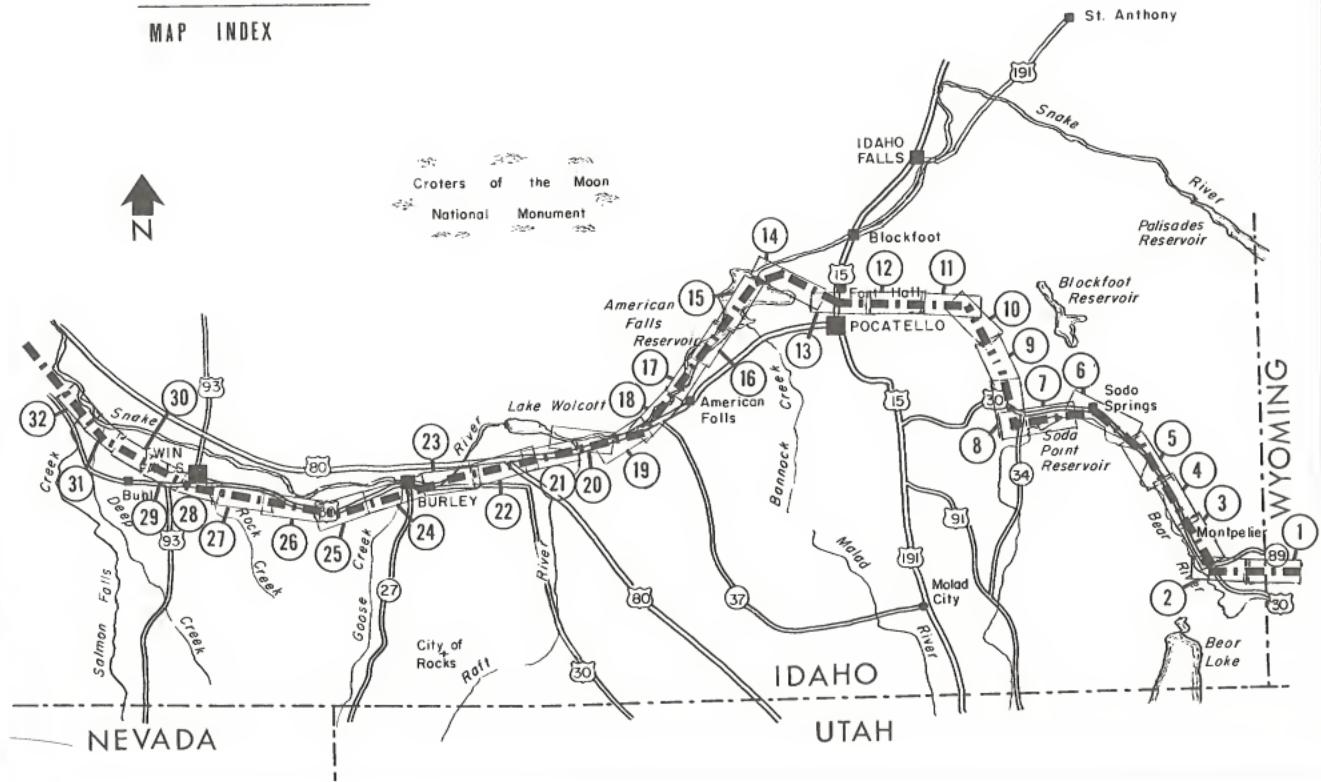
Most of the overland travellers started from the Missouri River near St. Joseph as soon as the spring grass was green enough to support the stock on the long, three-month drive. They left in varying-sized convoys for assistance and for protection, and made their way westward along the Platte River and its tributaries, up and over the continental divide in Wyoming, and then west and southwest toward Bear River. West of the divide there were several routes — some cut due west across the desert (Sublett's Cutoff) to Bear River, some went southwestward down to Fort Bridger and then northwestward to Bear River. They generally arrived at Bear River sometime in June-August at the latest, and once on the Bear, turned northward to follow it downward toward what is now southeastern Idaho.

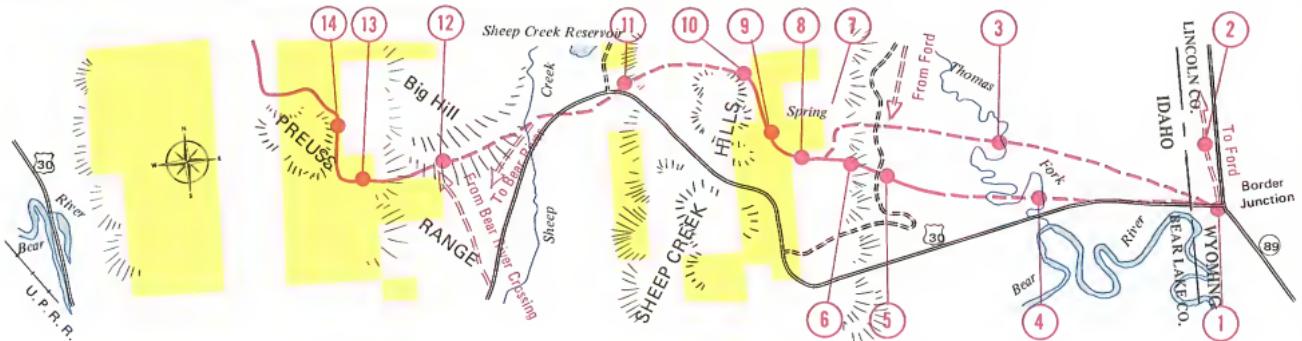
Paden (1944) can provide much more detail.

# Emigrant Trails of Southeastern Idaho

## OREGON TRAIL

### MAP INDEX





Once the travellers reached Bear River in Wyoming, they turned northward along it. Some turned westward after a few miles, crossed the river about three miles below Thomas Fork (but still in Wyoming), continued westward into Idaho, crossed Bear River again where the river has turned southward, and then turned northward up Sheep Creek to the main trail. See the 1843 map on page 17 for this route.

Most of the travellers, however, continued northward along Bear River to what is now the Idaho-Wyoming border; here they had a choice to make, but let them tell us themselves:

1. *At the head of the river. . . [Thomas Fork] there is a new road said to be somewhat neigher [nearer] than the old one. It crosses Thomas' Fork considerably farther south than the old road does, and when the waters are low, it is said to be the best road. . . (Condit)*

Those who went by way of the ford, a longer but easier route apparently, might say:

2. *On account of the wet, flat land at the bend of the [Bear] river, the road sweeps round three or four miles north, and turning south again, crosses Thomas' Fork a mile or more above its mouth. . . Crossed the ford and turning first down on the west side of the fork and then directly west into the hills. . . (Lord)*

Most of the travellers, however, elected to take the shorter, more troublesome route:

*At this place we save eight miles' travel by taking the left hand road and crossing two very bad and marshy streams on bridges; toll \$1 (Conyers)*

For those who elected to cross Thomas' Fork by the bridge, we think there were two routes crossing the main stream. A northern one, which included a slough:

3. *We crossed Thomas' Fork of Bear River on a bridge. By going up into the hills some two miles you can ford the creek, but the road is very bad. Today we crossed over the slough on a bridge. (G. Taylor)*

and a trading post:

*Passed Owens and Wilson's trading post, situated on Thomas Fork, Bear River. . . Crossed the fork and a slough on bridges. . . saved eight miles by doing so. (Cranstone)*

and a southern one, which crossed only the fork, and which was apparently used by most of the emigrants:

4. *. . . came to a bridge over Tom's [Thomas] Fork of Bear River, near four miles below the old ford or crossing. (Wayman)*
5. *After crossing this bridge we soon leave the valley of Bear River and again encounter the everlasting hills. At the beginning of our upward course to these places of the earth, we go up about a mile so steep that we have to stop often to rest man and beast. After we had gotten to what we had thought its summit [Sheep Creek Hills], we discover another eminence. However, this was not so difficult to ascend as the first. . . (Allyn)*

Some took the time to note the geology en route, such as Dr. Wayman, who in 1849 noted:

6. *The first mountain west of the Bear River] valley is principally made of argillaceous slate; the decomposed particles make the road here a perfect slate pike. Indeed it is not a very uncommon thing to find short pieces of natural pike road. (Wayman)*

It is not uncommon to find that there are numerous routes between two different points along the way. Some of the travellers mention a spring while en route to the top of the hill west of Thomas Fork; these persons must have taken the northern route:

7. *. . . a fine spring near the top, within five steps of the road. (B. Clark)*

Then, after the two roads had come together again:

8. *We had some frightful places to pass. We passed along the steep sides of mountains where every step loose earth slid from beneath our horses feet, and seemed to threaten to leave them without footing. In passing one of the side hills covered with slaty stone. . . slid and crumpled beneath the horses feet. . . (Walker)*



9. *After gaining its summit a deep and steep ravine makes its way down the other side. (Allyn)*

10. *We . . . passed ground where the stones appeared as if composed of pebbles, and earth baked together [conglomerate]. (Walker)*

11. *After going down one long, steep descent, and winding for a mile or more through a narrow ravine, we came to a beautiful valley, through which flowed one of those fine clear mountain brooks [Sheep Creek] peculiar to this region. (Delano)*

Sheep Creek Valley was quite a crossroad in the emigrant days; several variations on the western route were manifest here. Several travellers left the main route here and turned south to round the southern end of the Pruess Range, what the emigrants called "Big Hill," to join the main route again on the other side near the present community of Dingle.

It is here also that the road, coming northward from Bear River after crossing it in Wyoming, joins the main route. This route was used by many of the earlier travellers, such as Fremont and Talbot, in 1843. See map, page 17 for the understanding of this route in those days.

Continuing, as most did, along the main route westward:

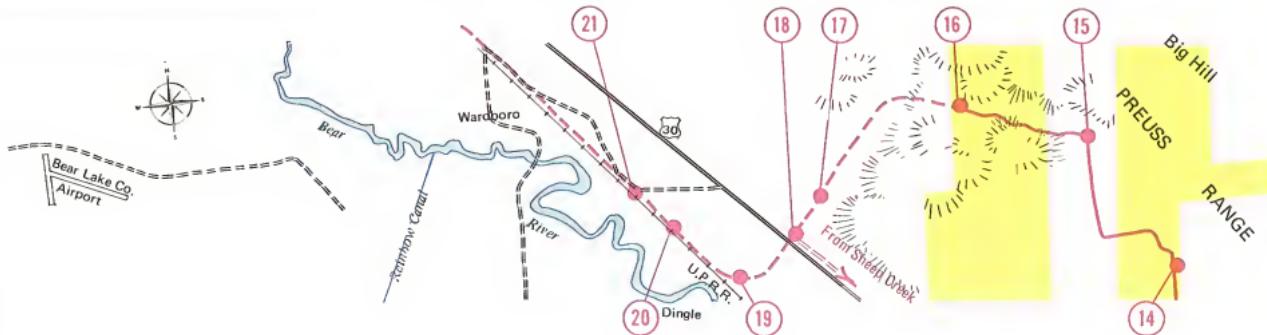
12. *We started up the mountain [Big Hill]. (Renshaw)*

13. *The road then turns a few rods to the right, then to the left down a ravine for three hundred yards, and then up a ravine for half a mile to the top of the mountain. We travelled about two miles along the ridge. (Palmer)*

Some also noted the geology en route:

*The hills are high and generally rocky, most of the rock have the appearance of being burnt, resembling old furnace walls, they are of different kinds. Mostly new to me. (J. Howell)*

14. *In one place a rock has tumbled down the precipice from above and almost blocked up the passage, so that a wagon could just wedge through. However, we got through and mounted another eminence and from thence soon came to another jumping off place, but not so long, or stoney, or siding. (Allyn)*



What is now called the Pruess Range was called Big Hill by many of the emigrants because it was the steepest and longest hill that they had yet encountered since leaving the Missouri River over a thousand miles eastward:

15. . . .being the longest and steepest I have yet ascended. Once on top you were well repaid for your labor by the extended view of hill and valley and mountains. (Perkins)

16. Three more miles down the descent; this is a long and dangerous descent and must be gone over with great care. (Belshaw)  
 17. On descending the hill and valley, the road lay over a barren soil without water, till we reached the [Bear] river at a point about three miles distant. (Delano)

While travelling along the smooth route from the base of Big Hill to Bear River, several diarists took time to reflect on the hilly route they had just taken. One noted:

18. The ascent is very long and tedious, but the descent is still more abrupt and difficult. I think that it might be avoided by following the river in the gap which it makes for itself through this same range of hills [and now utilized by U.S. Route 30]. and that by crossing and recrossing the river. (Talbot)

Such speculations were later actually realized, when, in 1852, such a route was taken. After coming to Sheep Creek (see Map 1):

. . . follow this creek [Sheep Creek] down one mile. This creek runs nearly north and south. After crossing[ing] this, 150 [yards], a small road turns off to the left down the creek. This road is 1½ or 2 miles farther than the one over the mountain, but by going on it, you avoid a long ascent [and] a long, steep, and rough and dangerous descent. . . Road joins the Bear River and turns to the right down it. The road runs between the [Bear] River and bluff [and] is tolerably narrow in two



Descent to Bear Lake Valley from Big Hill.  
 . . . and then turned to the left down the mountain. It is about one mile to the plain, and generally very steep and stoney. (Palmer)

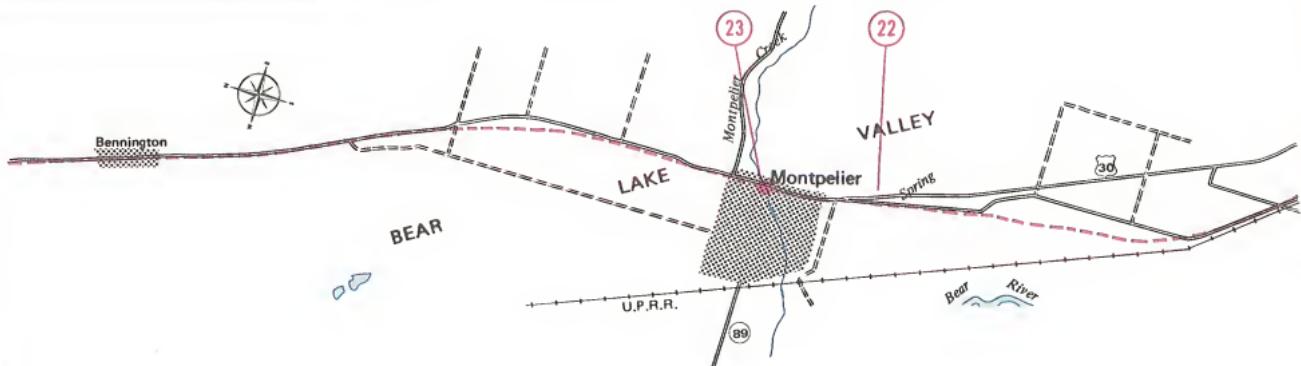
*places, between which is a spring branch; passes over a little rise; steep ascent; this is tolerably steep but it is short. At the summit [the route] is hardest on account of rocks. The descent is easy. . .Road runs through a thick wilderness; through this  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile. The latter part [of] the road runs under the bluff which is high and steep; the river runs close to it; the road is dug, but it would be impassable in high water as the road runs on the water's edge; the road leaves the river, joins the other road, and descends the bluff, [and] joins the [Bear] river again. (McAllister)*

Continuing on the main trail:

19. *The road strikes the [Bear] river two miles from the foot of the mountain, at Big Timber. (Palmer)*

It was here at Big Timber, near what is now Dingle, that Thomas L. "Pegleg" Smith established a trading post to trade with the emigrants. It was well situated, with plenty of water, timber, and grazing, all the requisites for a good stopping place in those days.

20. *. . .camped on Bear River, not far from where the road turns north down the river for Fort Hall. (Lord)*
21. *We found ourselves in a long valley with hills on either side. At the far southern extremity of this valley we could see the waters of the "Little Lake" [Bear Lake] on Bear River. It is nearly encompassed by mountains. (Talbot)*

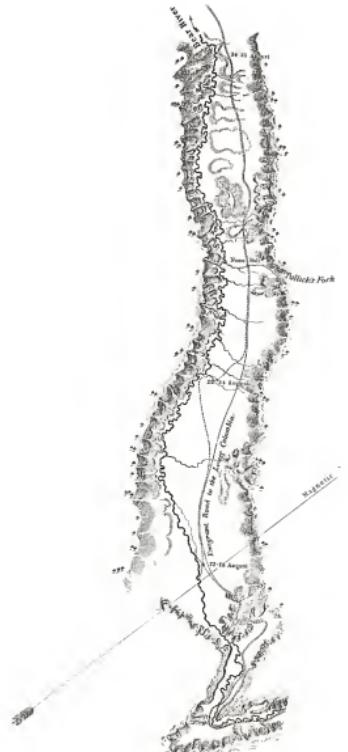


The road continues northward along the low, beautiful, fertile, Bear River Valley:

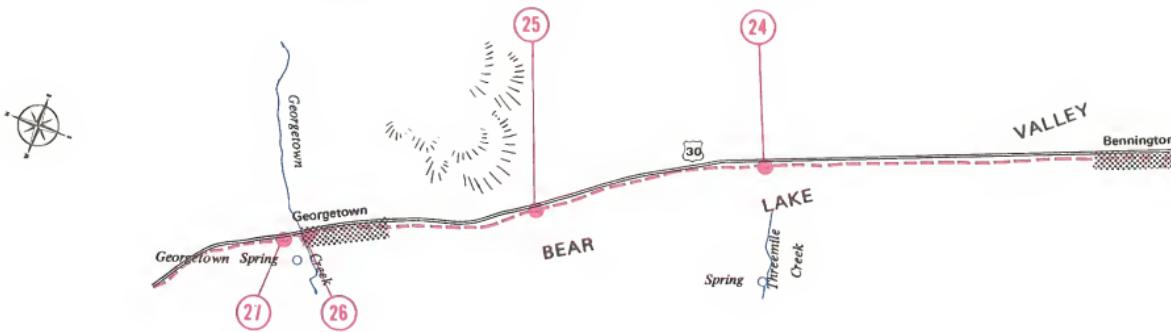
22. *Eight miles brought us to a spring branch. The bottom here is wide; a low marsh prevents driving to the river. (Palmer)*
23. *Went six miles over a level road [from Smith's Trading Post at Big Timber] and through a beautiful valley and camped on Tulluck's Fork [Montpelier Creek] of Bear River. (Farnham)*

Turnbull said of this creek:

*...it came down raging through these high mountains; ford good, about one foot deep and one rod wide. (Turnbull)*



Map of Bear Lake Valley, from Fremont, "Report of the exploring expeditions . . ." published in 1845. From Jackson and Spence "Expeditions of John Charles Fremont . . .", courtesy of the University of Illinois Press, 1970.



Continuing down the valley:

24. . . passing down the valley sixteen miles [from camp 4 miles west of Smith's Trading Post] . . . camped by a beautiful spring. . . This is the best watered region we have yet seen—within ten miles we have passed nearly as many mountain streams, some of them 2 yards wide. Some run between low ridges. . . and others merely wander over a level plain. Our camp is in a shallow valley [Threemile Creek] which is itself divided down as far as the camp by a ridge with a brook running on its north side. (Lord)
25. The valley of the Bear River may be briefly described. It varies from two to four miles in width, with a rich soil. . . The hills are generally covered with bunch grass, and sometimes fir and cedar trees appear on the sides near the summits and aspen are occasionally seen, giving a cheerful relief to the dull monotony of the nakedness, which this region of country universally presents. (Deacon)
26. Cold Water Creek [Georgetown Creek]. Just before reaching this creek, descend a steep bank or descent. This creek forks near the mountain, forming two delightful streams. (McAllister)
27. On left [of the] road some distance before reaching Soda Springs is a very large spring [Georgetown Spring] of the coldest water some 200 yards from the road on the level ground just before reaching the mountain ridge. (Decker)

Page from the diary of Dr. Charles Parke when he was in the Bear River Valley in 1849. (courtesy of Huntington Library and Art Gallery)

1431 Camp  
1020 Dif.  
393 Miles

where the grass was two feet high. We then ascended one of the longest hills we have over met, and descended one equally bare. When we came to the River bottom again, here we found an Indian Trading Post,  
snakes

July 17  
so m

Tuesday - Traveled 20 miles and camped in a small ravine leading to the River. Ten miles of the first part of our road was as level as a floor, the remainder more rolling.

Gas good, the crossed many fine streams of pure water running from the mountains. Still some snow visible on the mountain sides, if it is falling. I visited a sick man to day a Missionary to the Indians, but doing well.

Last evening we visited the Smiths to see the Indians. This is a Trading post at "Big timber". The Indians were a dirty looking set. Short & heavy in build and quite dark brown in color - like the mosquito. God only knows what they were made for.

July 18  
16 m

Wednesday. Left camp early in the morning and traveled 16 miles. We traveled ten miles and crossed near a spring boiling out of a rock made of the sediment. At this spring were two Snake Indians who had been trading with the Comanches. When we called on them they were preparing their dinner. Tom Worm Grey Squirrel, was their stock of provisions & yet they seemed happy!!

1447 Camp, etc  
1037 Dif.  
429 1/2 Miles  
from previous

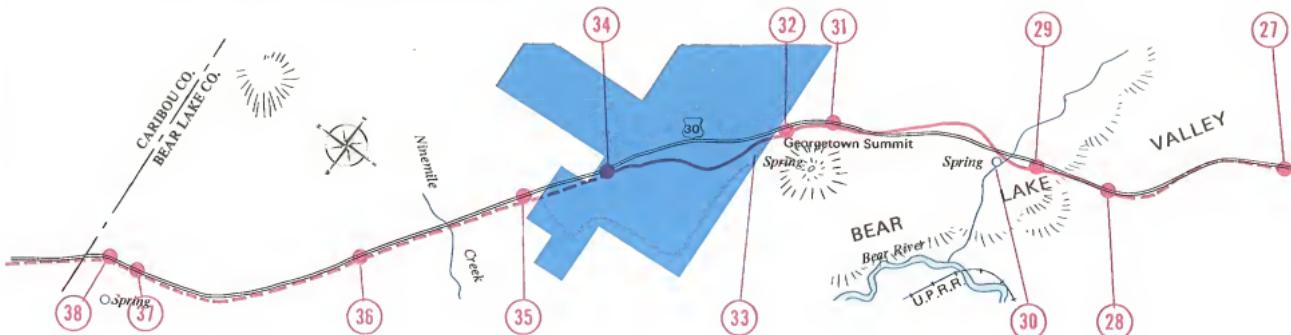
Is ignorance bliss? It was very interesting, as well as amusing to watch their prepare their food, before the table, now they, but for their stomach, to satisfy hunger. They first prepare a fire with plenty of live coals into which the 4 squirrels were buried just as caught, hair entire and all!!!

Every now and then a squirrel would be dragged out with a small stick and into it, would be thrust a stiff blade or splinter to ascertain whether it has cooked enough or not. Then satisfied the fire had done its work the squirrels were all drawn out and as soon as possible thrown without stopping to offer up prayer, they devoured the quadrupeds, hide, entrails and much of the bones, apparently happy. Although not knowing where the next meal would come from.

These squirrels are gray in color, little fat, short tails, quite fat, and very good eating even to a man from the States!

Six miles brought us to Beta w Bees Spring. One of the greatest curiosities we have yet seen - The water is said to contain Cash lime - Cash Magnesia, Iron & C. Sodium.

These springs flow from the top of a cone made by the deposit of sediment from the water. Some of these mounds or cones are from 30 to 80 feet high. There are quite a number of them, and many have caves to discharge water from the top. The water is rather warm. By the addition of a little Lime and Sulfuric Acid we made quite a pottery article. The road to day goods also good. Went fishing to day. Caught a Speckled trout 15 inches long.



Continuing northward and westward through the Bear Lake Valley, the emigrants came to a spur of the mountain crossing the valley:

28. We then took up a small valley, or rather one not so large as Bear River Valley [Bear Lake Valley], and followed it to its head. We crossed several fine creeks, and passed two or three excellent springs of clear, cold water. (Hale)

29. . . .went up a high, smooth peak, by a very gradual ascent, much like a wagon road; and indeed, from camp it looked much like one. Another lower peak on the west is connected with this, at whose base, on the west side, Bear River finds a channel; the mountains rising from its western shore or bank. At the northern base of the peak I ascended lies a very pretty, nearly triangular valley, of more than a mile in diameter. A small stream runs across the road. . .through this bottom. . .The river here sweeps round to the west two or three miles, and then turns northerly again. (Lord)

30. The[n] pass between two hill[s], up and down a descent, at the foot of which is a beautiful spring, left of road, also a branch which you go right of for  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile, then cross it, go a short distance, and cross it again and ascend a hill. . .(McAllister)

31. Seven miles. . .brought us to a high ridge that here crosses the valley [Georgetown Summit]. Here we found a grade about 5 miles east of the [Bear] river, where we crossed with tolerable ease. (Crawford)

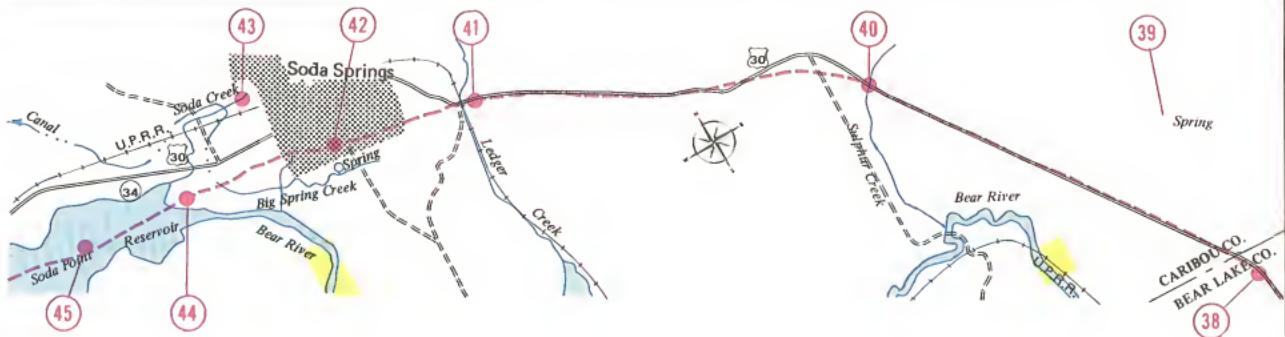
32. . . .the descent. . .is in a hollow; after descending some distance pass some large gray rocks. (McAllister)

Limestone outcrops along the northeast side of the trail just west of Georgetown Summit.



*-patches of white, coarse lime-stone. (Bruff)*

33. . . a small spring. You do not cross its branch but travel near it for  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile, then ascend a hill. These ascents and descents are not very hard. (McAllister)
34. The road now runs over several ravines, hollows, etc., but is not a very bad road; you will cross a branch or two in the next 15 miles but probably you will find but little water in them. . . Bear River  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 miles from the road. (McAllister)
35. The road . . keeping nearly in the general direction of the river til it gets about half way between that and the eastern range of mountains. The river bottom in the valley is hardly a mile wide, and all on the west side, but a succession of low hills or ridges, running west from the base of the eastern mountains down to the river, occupies a space of four or five miles, gradually narrowing as you approach the bend of the river north. (Lord)
36. The roads this day were extremely dusty but they were good although they were a good deal hilly. (Farnham)
37. There are numerous roads leading down to the river, one of which we took, and camped on a bluff thirty feet high, facing directly south, under which the river forms a remarkable eddy. (Lord)
38. We drove to where the valley took to the left, where we found a fine spring of water a little distance from the road. (Hale)  
*There is a very good spring forty rods east of camp, high up on the north side of a ravine. (Lord)*



No one complained of a lack of water in Bear River Valley. Many of the travellers left the road, however, to get to water:

39. *We camped at the big spring above the road. (Condit)*

Then, at Sulphur Creek, the emigrants first encounter volcanic rock. There is none along the route from the Missouri River to here:

40. *The first four miles [from camp on Bear River] brought us to volcanic remains. Small piles of black rock, appearing very much like blacksmith's cinders, with deep fissures in the earth where they have been thrown up and burned, appear in different directions. Here, as you approach the mountains, which seem to block up the valley on the northwest, there appears to be a broad plain-like prairie stretching north to a great distance, and having in spots the same black masses. . . The timber stands on limestone, deposited in successive layers – some of them very thin, others thick; and the whole surface broken or excavated into shallow basins, ledges, and holes. (Lord)*

41. *Ladd [Ledge] Creek and spring, water clear and cool, but tastes a little of the soda. . . good road. (McAllister)*

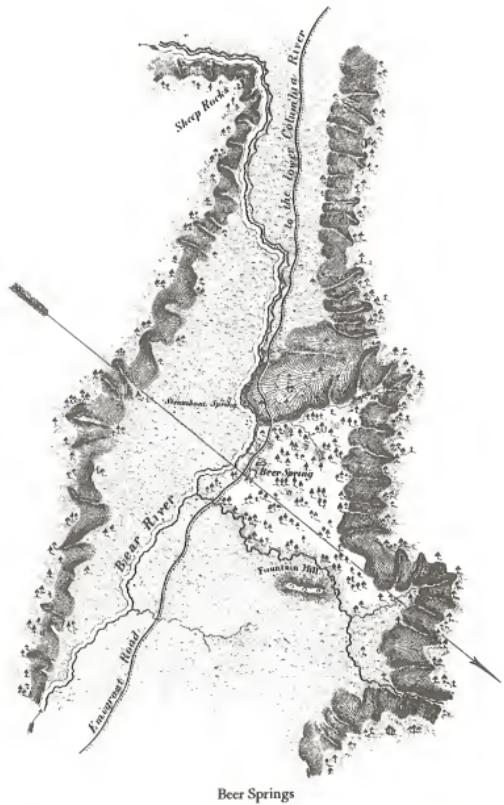
42. *. . . we passed a large spring [Big Spring] of clear, cold water which bursts from the ground and forms quite a stream in a very short distance. It is very pure and not the least bit impregnated with gas. Not over a hundred yards from this spring there is another, the water of which has a metallic taste with gas constantly escaping from the bottom. (Cross)*

The road here passes into the Soda Springs region, well-known since the days of the fur trappers. Among the earliest trained observers to visit the region was Fremont, in 1843:

43. *I visited several remarkable red and white hills, which had attracted my attention from the road. . . These are immediately upon [Soda Creek], and. . . are formed by the deposition of successive strata from the springs. On their summits, the orifices through which the waters had been discharged were so large that they resembled miniature craters, some of them being several feet in diameter, circular, and regularly formed as if by art. At a former time, when these dried-up fountains were all in motion, they must have made a beautiful display on a grand scale; and nearly all this basin appears to me to have been formed under their action, and should be called the Place of Fountains.*

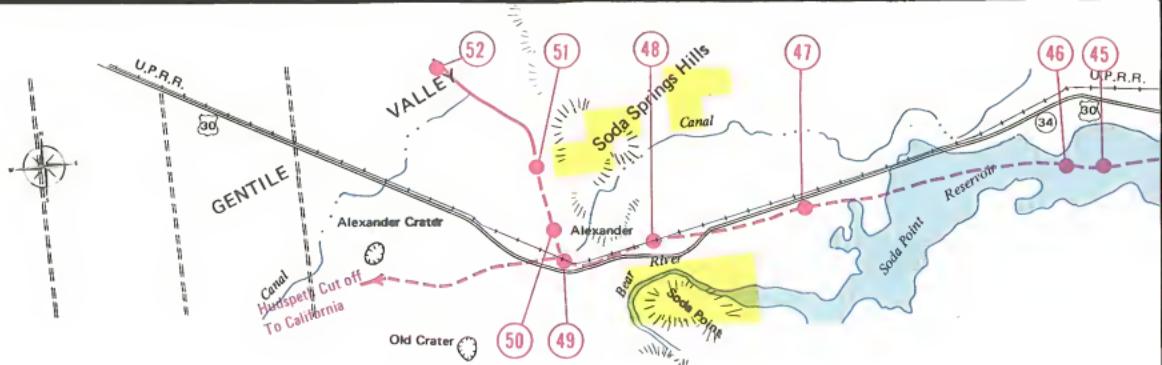
*At the foot of one of these hills, or rather on its side near the base, are several of these small limestone columns, about one foot in diameter at the base and tapering upward to a height of three or four feet; and on the summit the water is boiling up and bubbling over, constantly adding to the height of the little obelisks. In some, the water only boils up, no longer overflowing. . . (Fremont)*

44. *A pretty little stream of clear water [Soda Creek] enters the upper part of the basin from an open valley in the mountains and, passing through the bottom, discharges into Bear River.*



Crossing this stream, we descended a mile below, and made our encampment in a grove of cedar immediately at the Beer Springs, which, on account of the effervescing gas and acid taste, have received their name from the voyageurs and trappers of the country, who, in the midst of their rude and hard lives, are fond of finding some fancied resemblance to the luxuries they rarely have the fortune to enjoy. . . .the Beer Springs were numerous; but, as far as we could ascertain, were entirely confined to that locality in the bottom. In the bed of the river, in front, for a space of several hundred yards, they were very abundant, the effervescing gas rising up and agitating the water in countless bubbling columns. In the vicinity round about were numerous springs of an entirely different and equally marked mineral character. (Fremont)

Map of the Soda Springs area,  
prepared by John C. Fremont,  
in 1843. He called them the  
Beer Springs. Courtesy of  
University of Illinois Press,  
1970.

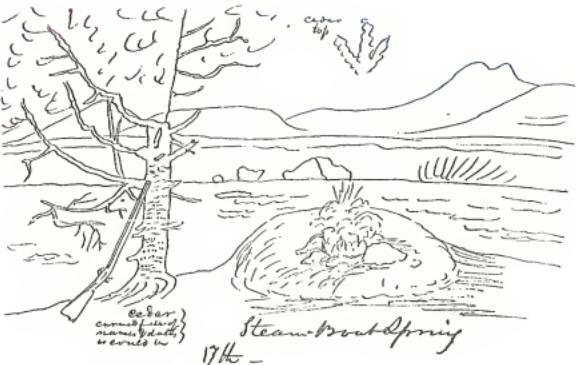


The most famous feature in the Soda Springs area, and perhaps on the entire Oregon Trail, was Steamboat Springs—now submerged, along with most of the Soda Springs, by the water of the Soda Point reservoir. Again, Fremont is one of the most descriptive writers:

46. In a rather picturesque spot, about 1300 yards below our encampment [at Beer Springs] and immediately on the riverbank, is the most remarkable spring of the place. In an opening in the rock, a white column of scattered water is thrown up, in form like a jet d'eau, to a variable height of about 3 feet, and, although it is maintained in constant supply, its greatest height is attained only at regular intervals, according to the action of the force below. It is accompanied by a subterranean noise, which, together with the motion of the water, makes very much the impression of a steamboat in motion, and, without knowing that it had been previously so called, we gave to it the name of the Steamboat Spring. The rock through which it is forced is slightly raised in a convex manner, and gathered at the opening into an urn-mouthed form...by continued deposition from the water, and colored bright red by the oxide of iron.

*It is a hot spring, and the water has a pungent and disagreeable metallic taste, leaving a burning effect on the tongue. Within perhaps two yards of the jet d'eau is a small hole of about an inch in diameter, through which, at regular intervals, escapes a blast of hot air with a light wreath of smoke, accompanied by a regular noise.*

*. . . the ceaseless motion and the play of the fountain, the red rock, and the green trees near, make this a picturesque spot.*



Steamboat Springs, on the Bear River, sketched by J.G. Bruff in 1849.

*A short distance above the spring, and near the foot of the same spur, is a very remarkable yellow-colored rock, soft and friable, consisting principally of carbonate of lime and oxide of iron, of regular structure, which is probably a fossil coral. The rocky bank along the shore between the Steamboat Spring and our encampment, along which is dispersed the water from the hills, is composed entirely of strata of calcareous tufa, with the remains of moss and reedlike grasses, which is probably the formation springs. (Fremont)*

These spring deposits can still be seen when the water in the reservoir is low.

Leaving Soda Springs:

47. . . .the road runs near the river some. . . (McAllister)

48. Crossing the plain some four miles from the [Steamboat] springs, we camped in the bend of Bear River where it turns to the south. We were on an elevated plain, on the opposite side of the river was a huge precipitous mountain [Soda Point, also known as Sheep Rock] and the river ran between its base and a ledge of rocks forming the boundary of the plain some 75 or 100 feet high. Our animals could not get to the water at all and we were obliged to scramble up the ledge with a bucket apiece for our own use. . . The bend of the river is about two miles across only and from a due north its course thenceforth becomes nearly south. (Perkins)

It is here at Sheep Rock that several trails diverged. A little-used route, mostly employed by packers, turned southward and followed Bear River; in July 1849, Benoni Hudspeth founded Hudspeth's Cutoff, going due west from Sheep Rock; but the Oregon-bound travellers turned northward:

49. Five miles brought us to where the road leaves the [Bear] river, and bears northward through a valley. . . The range of mountains bounding the north side of the river [Soda Springs Hills] here comes to within half a mile of it, then bears off to the north, leaving a valley of seven or eight miles in width between it and a range coming from Lewis [Snake] river [Portneuf Range], and extending south towards Salt Lake. The range bounding the south side of the [Bear] river [Bear River Range] comes abruptly to the stream at this point [Soda Point] presenting huge and cumbrous masses of basaltic [quartzite] rock, but it is generally covered with heavy timber. At this point, two trails are found: one heading west, across the valley, to the opposite side; the other, which is the nearest and best, follows around the point, hugging the base of the mountain for several miles. (Palmer)



Sheep Rock of emigrant days,  
now called Soda Point.

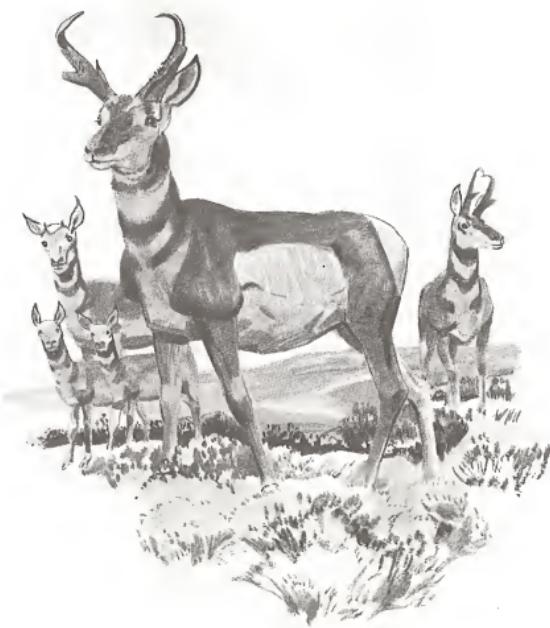
The above statement, written in 1845, is an example of some of the mysteries that remain to be solved about the emigrant trails in southeastern Idaho. This reference to a west-bound trail here, preceding by four years the coming of Hudspeth, is wonderfully fascinating to the historian.

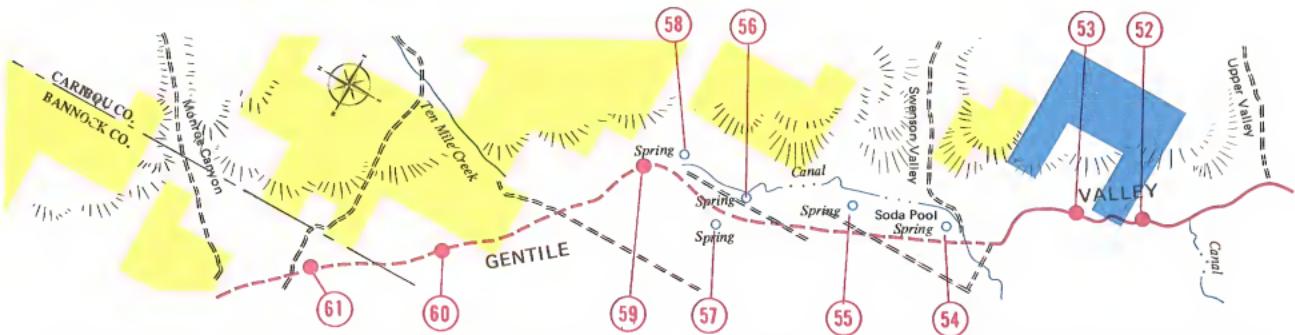
50. *We left the track of the Californians today for good about six miles from the [Soda] springs. Crossed a chasm in the rocky road, how long, we could not tell, and in places so deep we could not see the bottom. Must have been caused by an earthquake. (Adams)*

51. *From where the road leaves the river, the country presents every appearance of having been volcanic at some period. Craters are yet standing in the plain, exhibiting positive evidence of this fact. A large mound has been formed by the lava ejected from this crater. In the center is a deep cavity, now partially filled from the falling in of the masses of bank surrounding it. In every direction the eye rests upon fragments of rocks, which have been thrown out in a hot and burning condition, many of them melted and united; pieces resembling broken junk bottles or black glass lay scattered over the plain [obsidian or pitchstone]. The valley for ten or twelve miles is covered with stone of this description. In many places the rocks have been lifted or bulged up to an elevation of ten or fifteen feet, the top has been burst as under presenting a cavity of eight or ten feet in width, caused by the fragments having been cast out [actually pressure ridges, the cracks formed by the stretching of the lava as it bulged up]; the depth of the cavity is from 20 to 30 feet, the sides have a black appearance, and exhibit indications of having been burned; at other places the rock had been lifted up, and elevated above the surface of the earth some 5 or 6 feet, and about the same in width, having numerous small apertures in it, the center being concave. The stone forms a complete arch. At other places the rock has been rent, and a chasm of 30 or 40 feet in depth and from 2 to 10 feet in width has been the result. These chasms are about one quarter of a mile in length. (Palmer)*

*[Alexander] crater. . . is covered with grass within and without. The length is about the same, but it appears much older, and near it are three or four tumuli, which looked as if they were thrown out when the volcano was in active operation. They all stand isolated on the plain, with high mountains all around in the distance. The direct approach from the road to these craters was somewhat difficult. (Delano)*

52. *. . . our apparent smooth road was rough and rocky, all covered with cinders of the hardest kind, and broken into chasms and deep holes in all directions, and the forenoon was wholly the worst road we have seen. (Clyman)*





Turning northward across the lava field, the travellers hugged the East side of Gentile Valley in order to find water and avoid the worst of the area.

53. About three miles further is a rock perhaps 30 feet long, 8 feet high [and] 8 feet wide. At the base it was shattered so we could look into it and it was hollow. A mile or so further on, the earth was cracked for a great many feet in length. (Geer)

54. . . . we next came to a spring which was still a greater curiosity, if possible. This spring is on the right hand side of the road: it runs out of a low bluff of these black rocks. All about the spring there is a kind of white rock, which has been formed by the water. All round the spring, for four rods in circumference, perhaps, the rock rises about two feet high, which hemms the water in, making a small pan. The water now has found a place to run out at, probably the rock has been broken. No doubt the water before ran out all around except at the bluff. This made if form in the shape of a basin. (Ranshaw)



Fissure in lava in Gentile Valley.

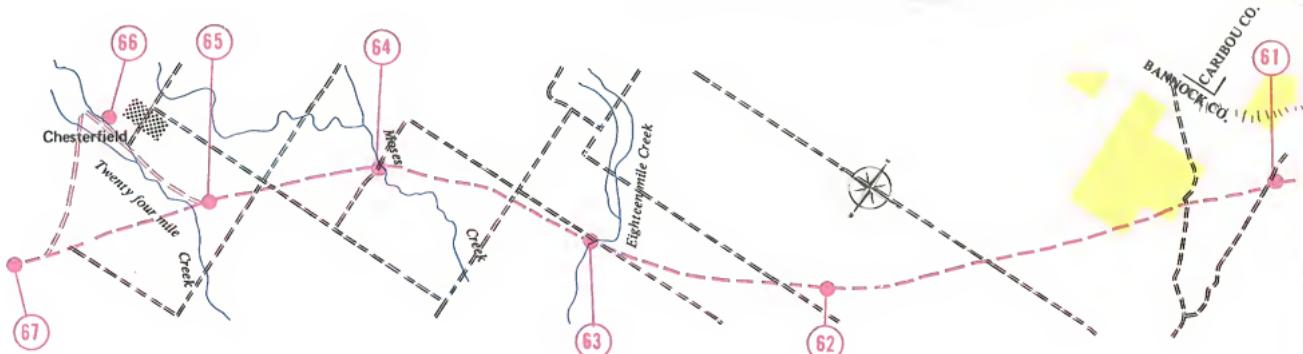
Ten miles [from Soda Springs] brought us to another spring of the same sort. It was on the right of the road coming from a high bluff. It is sometimes called Soda Pool. The water from the spring runs into a basin which was formed by the crystallization of the water at its edges. It is 25 feet in diameter and the wall around is 2 feet. (Bryarly)



55. One mile from this pool is a good spring. (Conyers)
56. One mile further on is another good cold spring of water, but this has that same soda taste. (Conyers)
57. There are many other soda springs along the left of [the] road for  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile. (McAllister)
58. Bear Spring branch. This spring is [on the] right of [the] road in a hollow. It does not boil up, but comes out of the bank and runs off; [the] water tastes a little of the soda, but it is not unpalatable. (McAllister)
59. We then directed our course through the plain for some 8 or 9 miles. . . (Palmer)

Here the road passes onto the Tenmile Creek lava flow where it has spilled out into the Gentile Valley from the Blackfoot Valley to the east:

60. We found in this vicinity several crevices in the earth formed by volcanic eruptions. They were from 2 to 3 feet wide and no knowing how deep. A rock the size of one's fist dropped into one of these crevices could be heard for hundreds of feet as it struck the walls of the crevice on either side. These crevices are nearly covered by the growing grass. . .(Conyers)
61. You have no hills to ascend or descend, but the road is rocky in places. . .an ugly descent [off the lava flow]; it is neither long nor steep, but is very rocky. (McAllister)



Leaving the eastern edge of Gentile Valley, the travellers enter onto the gentle slope leading downward to Portneuf River:

62. *Our road along the valley is more like an ash heap than anything else. (Hanna)*
63. *. . . in crossing the first stream [Eighteenmile Creek]. . . cattle drank poisoned water. We saw several places where those going before us had turned from the main road to find a good place to cross. We took one which led off some distance. . . The water is. . . worse below the road [in the swamp] than above. (Ketcham)*

Others stopped here also, and tell us what they did about it:

*We camped this evening where grass was abundant, but it was found directly that our cattle were poisoned. The process of doctoring therefore commenced; medicine, lard, or bacon. The source of the poison seems to be uncertain. Some suppose it to be alkali, others a weed which, however, is unknown. (Robe)*

64. *. . . next crossed a branch of Portneuf [Moses Creek]. (Renshaw)*
65. *We passed through a number of sloughs and branches [Eighteenmile and Twentyfourmile Creeks], the waters of which are slightly impregnated with sulphur, with marshy beds. (Pritchard)*

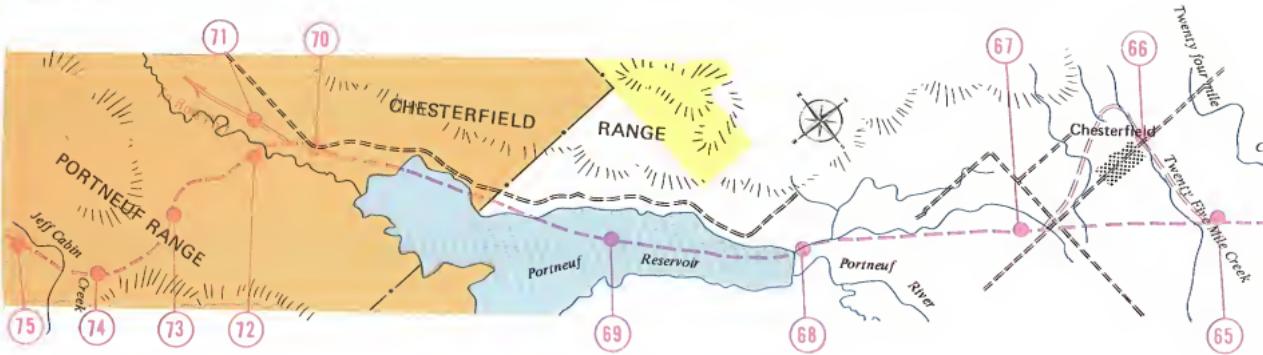
Here the road divided again, with good water to the right:

66. *. . . went on to another stream some distance ahead [Twentyfourmile Creek]. . . We had the greatest ride over a rough road through the grass and mud, and went all of two miles out of our way. . . we struck the main road again. (Ketcham)*

But the short route continued straight ahead:

67. *. . . cross a small slough. (McAllister)*





Here the road enters the Portneuf River bottoms, now flooded in part by Portneuf Reservoir, and then another decision had to have been made:

68. *Portneuf [River], a stream having some curiosity about it. . . heading in the mountain dividing Bear and Snake Rivers and taking a southern course into the valley of the Bear River, it turns short into the mountain [toward Lava Hot Springs]. (Clyman)*

69. *We travelled up a little stream during the morning called "Tulock's Fork" [Portneuf River]. It is a clear, pure little stream. . . (Bryarly)*

and then, if the water was high:

70. *Wend our way along between the creek. . . [Portneuf River] and the foot of the hills for a few miles. . . came to a toll bridge. (Allyn)*

or, if the water was low:

*. . . followed up this creek 5 miles, fording deep and muddy. . . (Coltria)*

Before July 28, 1845, the Oregon-bound emigrants did not cross Portneuf River here, but continued northward for several miles before turning westward to encounter Ross Fork Creek, which guided them to Fort Hall:

71. *. . . camped on the Portneuf [River] . . . Steered our course up a beautiful rich valley; crossed several beautiful small brooks. . . 15 miles, and encamped at a good spring [Quedup Spring] . . . Took a west course, passed through a narrow gap [Baker Canyon] in a range of mountains five miles; came on a small stream. . . down which we travelled ten miles [Ross Fork] . . . (Harritt)*

after this date, however:

72. *The road turns to the left, and begins to ascend the mountain. . . creek right of road. (McAllister)*

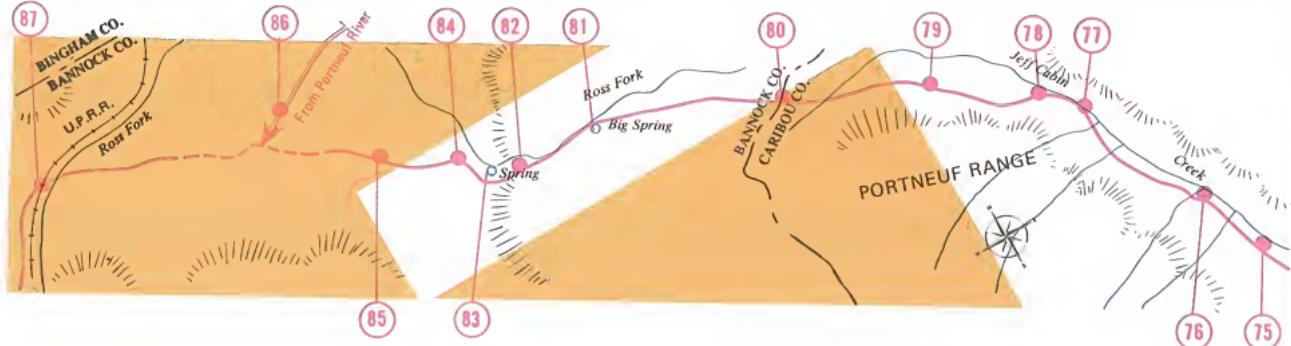
Following is an example of one of the pleasures of historical geography. We have the diary account of the second wagon train over a new route:

73. *[July 29, 1845] We travelled about 14 miles today camping on a small creek which is probably the branch of Bear River [Portneuf River]. I omitted mentioning yesterday [July 28] that we had left the regular road again not far from the Soda Springs to take a nearer cut under the pilotage of a Frenchman. Our company found and employed him at the [soda] springs but we had not proceeded far before we found the Greenwoods were conducting Teatherows company by the same route and as they made a plain road for us to follow, our pilot returned. We have not yet got in to the old road, but we have thus far had an easy level way and from the relative bearings of the two roads, we must cut off at least nine or ten miles. We had an excellent camp with plenty of grass and water. These Greenwoods are an old man and three sons whom he has raised in the Indian country. They are well posted on the route. . . [July 30] – Went about 16 miles today crossing the dividing mountain between Bear and Snake Rivers and camping upon a small creek [Ross Fork] which runs into the latter stream so that we are now upon the waters of Oregon. About four miles from our [morning] camp [at Big Spring] we struck and crossed the old road [,] crossing*

*the mountains by a route that wagons had never taken before. Teatherow passed over it. Although it was the regular pack trail, we struck the old road again about two miles from our present [evening] camp. An excellent road could be made across here with but little labor and in its present condition, it is not a hard road and saves 8 miles travel. (Field)*

But, to return to the junction:

74. . . forded Partner's Creek [Portneuf River] a little below the bridge and then went on two miles to the little creek at the bluffs. (Condit)
75. This day's march was entirely among the hills, as our road, after crossing a very mirey swamp, passed along the side of a hill some distance and entered a gorge [Jeff Cabin Creek]. After winding around the base of the hills for some time, the road began to ascend. (Cross)



The passage from the Portneuf River to Ross Fork was over the Portneuf Range, was high, but gentle and well watered:

- 76. Cross a branch of the creek. (McAllister)
- 77. The road is very rough but not steep. . .cross several branches. (McAllister)
- 78. After this we commence again to climb the everlasting hills, as the valley was too crooked. We travelled upwards about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles, part of the way very steep, and then were but half way to the summit. (Allyn)
- 79. . .the road winds its way up a large hollow. . . (McAllister)
- 80. After dinner I started off for the top of a high mountain near us. Before we came as far, we caught a glimpse of the plains beyond the Rocky Mountains. Mr. Gray said that if we were on the tops of some of the hills near us we might see 75 miles away. I could not resist the inclination I felt to see this view. . . I started off. . . I think I went all of half a mile straight up. . . When I got as far as I did go I was disappointed, for the view was so smoky I could not see distinctly at all. I think the view must be splendid if seen when the air is clear. However, I could see the blue outline of two of the three tetons [Three Buttes] at least 65 miles from us, and the vast space between us. (Ketcham)
- 81. We then descended down  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile; there is a large spring on the left hand a few yards from the road. . .this is the first water running west we have seen. (Belshaw)

82. . .took down a ravine toward the valley and was very rocky, sideling and [with] many short pitches. While going down this defile we pass some of the most splendid springs I ever saw. (Allyn)

83. . .went 8 miles to best springs [Big Spring] . . .between ranges of mountains partly covered with snow. This spring forms one of the heads of the Columbia River [Ross Fork]. (Condit)



"Big Spring" - one of the heads of Ross Fork.

84. *The ravine that we started down soon became a large creek [Ross Fork], being augmented by many springs. (Allyn)*

85. . . .we followed down the descent by the big spring about 5 miles and then we came out of the mountains and into a fine little valley. (Belshaw)

It is here, on Ross Fork, that the new road over the Portneuf Range reunites with the old road which is descending along Ross Creek. Zeiber was a traveller who took the old road, to avoid the hill on the new road, and as he comes to the junction he notes:

86. *Passed through the little valley, through which I had strolled. . . [Baker Canyon] till I reached the emigrant road. . . camped on Ross Creek, not having gone very far. (Zeiber)*

Then, both the roads:

87. . . .crossed a creek [Ross Fork] that the banks were two feet high and so bad we thought it best to dig it down. (Hale)



The trail now follows Ross Fork toward the west:

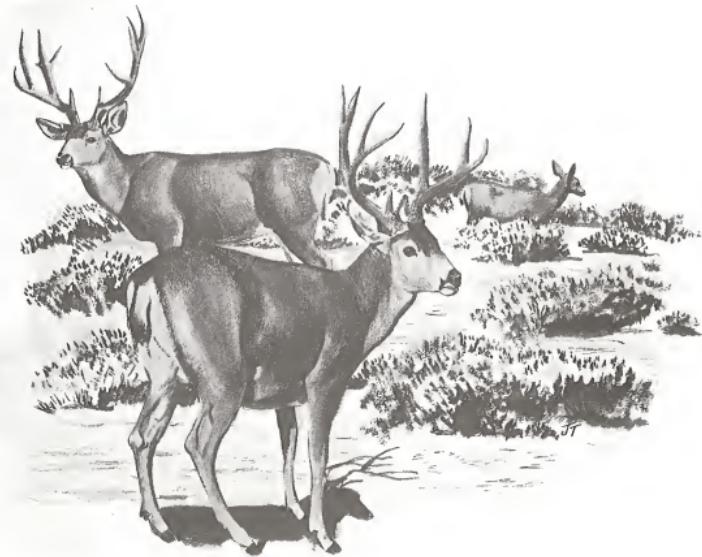
88. . . to a gap in the mountains [Narrows of Ross Fork] where the creek passes, which is truly interesting to a traveller. (Condit)
89. Soon after we crossed the creek it had the appearance of going under the hill, but it did not – it ran through a gap. (Hale)
90. . . we have seen rocks on a grand scale. . . Saw some very large ones which Mr. Gray [the guide] said were pure quartz. They shone and sparkled in the sun like silver. (Ketcham)



Boulder-strewn slopes, Ross Fork Narrows. Quartzite caps the hills.

Miss Hines also noted these boulder-strewn slopes in the Ross Fork Narrows:

- . . . large rocks were seen on the sides of the mountains, perfectly isolated, with grass all around them. (Hines)
91. . . passed through a very romantic gorge between high rugged ridges. . . can look down 100 to 150 feet perpendicular and see the stream [Ross Fork] of a spring above rush through a narrow gorge of wildest character. (Decker)
92. The road follows the creek to the foot of the mountain. (McAllister)
93. The road leaves the creek and turns to the right up a rise. . .  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile below is a junction of creeks [Farmer and South Fork join Ross Fork]. (McAllister)
94. . . the road soon joins the creek again and then runs near it for five miles. (McAllister)





Having left the mountains, the travellers continue on the Snake River plain westward, making for Fort Hall:

95. . . road leaves the creek [Ross Fork] and ascends a rise. (McAllister)

Not everyone went westward via Fort Hall, however. Once it was bypassed by the bulk of the emigrants taking Hudspeth's Cutoff it lost its influence and many travellers turned southwestward from here, rather than northwestward, to join the Fort Hall road southwest of Fort Hall (Map 15, p. 44).

Some examples are:

96. We continued down this creek [Ross Fork] till the valley of Portsmith [Portneuff] opened before us. . . The road continues on a kind of up-land plain, or table land all this day. Cross a creek that I cannot name [Ross Fork] with a very high and abrupt bank, to descend, which was dangerous. At last we arrive at the ferry on Partnithie [Portneuff] and cross. . . The stream is 5 rods wide. . . we start on and soon again rise onto the table land [Michael Flats] which is barren, bearing scarcely anything but sage and many sandbanks and ridges. At length we camp on the brow of a sandbank, where there was water. . . [Portneuf River] at the foot. . . (Allyn)

Travelled] 8 miles down the creek [from the Narrows of Ross Fork] and camped on a flat between the creek and the road. . . Travelled 22 miles today, viz., 2 miles to the forks of the road; took the south road and went 11 miles [to] Portneuf bridge. . . then crossed. . . [Jimmy

Drink Spring] and went on across the point of the bluffs down the course of the river 9 miles and camped on the bluffs near the [Portneuf] River. . . Did not pass Fort Hall. (Condit)

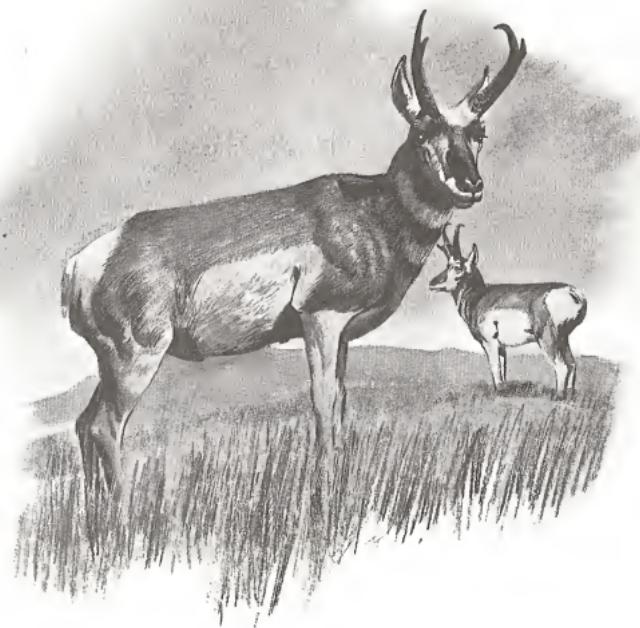
. . . camped on the bottom near a stream [Ross Fork]. . . Left Ft. Hall about 12 miles to the north, thereby saving 16 miles, and it is said that the road is better. . . came to the Portneuf River, which we had to ford. . . We camped about a mile on, near a fine spring [Jimmy Drink Spring]. . . Our road was through the sagebrush. Before noon it led along the Portneuf River, sometimes over hills. . . (Hines)

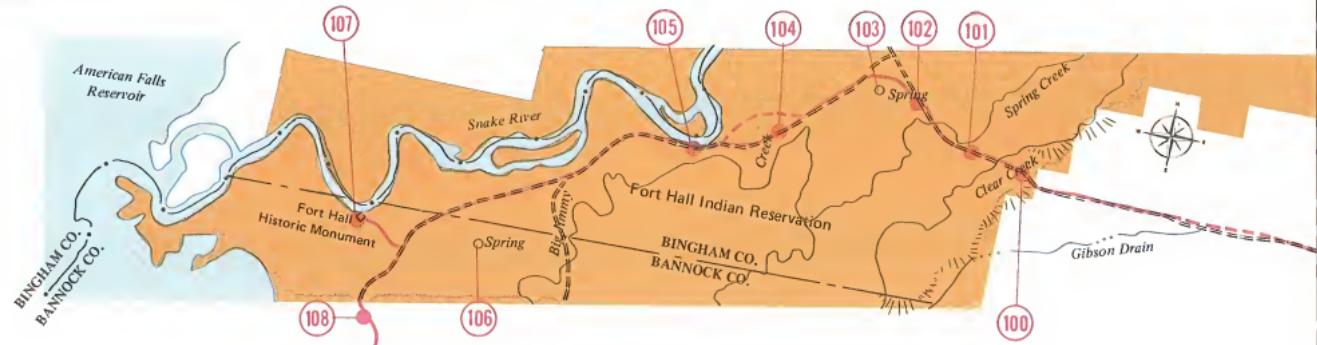
Most of the travellers took the road to Fort Hall, however:

97. We descended a long hill which brought us in to a sandy plain. This extends to Fort Hall and [to] the banks of the Portneuf (Cross)

98. We left the creek and took through the valley. . . It was a long dry sandy road but we got out of the sand and to water. (Hale)

99. This is decidedly the heaviest piece of road that we have yet had. The dry, black, heavy sand was up to the axles the whole way, making one continuous drag. (Bryarly)





Here the road leaves the sandy bench and passes down through the well-watered bottoms to Fort Hall:

100. *The road is very sandy but level to a descent and Mud Creek [Clear Creek] about 25 feet wide and 1 to 2 feet deep; tolerably good water but it is [af] difficult crossing on account of the mud which does not smell sweet, and [an] extensive bottom. (McAllister)*
101. . . entered the [Snake] River bottom; the most sublime place we have seen since we left the South Fork of the Platte River; a number of fine springs rose in the level plain. . . (Harritt)
102. *As you cross the valley to approach the [Snake] River, there are many small streams to pass over, where the banks are miry and dangerous. (Cross)*
103. *We then crossed a stream [Spring Creek] and came to the bottom of Lewis Fork [Snake River] of the Columbia and five miles from Fort Hall. . . We have another splendid spring near us. (Hanna)*
104. *We soon encountered a marsh and slough. . . The road is through a swamp and these sloughs are every 200 yards. Our guide informs me that heretofore this has always been a smooth, hard, excellent road, and the vast amount of water now here is accounted for in the same manner as it has been during the trip. (Bryarly)*
105. . . before you reach the fort [Hall] you touch upon the bend of a river.

*This is Lewis's Fork or Snake River, one of the tributaries to the Columbia. It is, at this point, 120 yards wide and looks very deep, but not with a very strong current. (Bryarly)*

Snake River at Fort Hall, looking upstream from the landing.

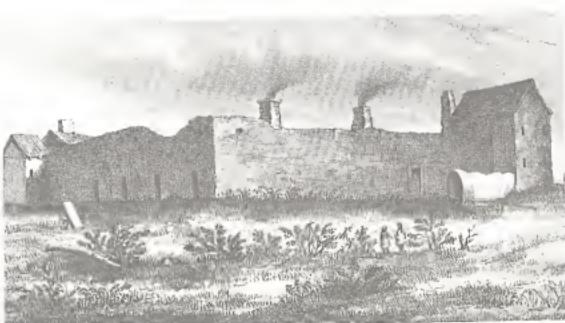




The monument marking the site of Fort Hall. Floods, fire, and disease have removed all the structures.

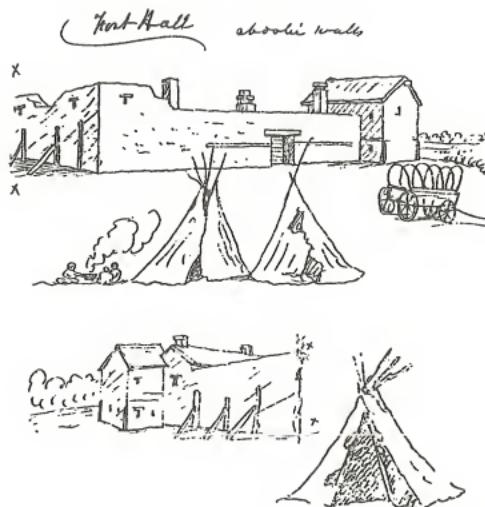
106. . . four miles to an old house made of sun-burned brick. This house is supposed to be built by some old trapper so as to be near the fort. There is a good cold spring near this old house. From here we travelled one mile to Fort Hall. . . (Conyers)

107. Fort Hall. . . is built of adobes, but has more wood about it than common, and consequently retains its original shape better than they generally do. It is much the same looking ranch as Laramie's [Fort Laramie in Wyoming] but is not as large or as high. It has a fine court in the center, with a fountain of water [well] in the middle. There is an entrance on the south side and one on the north. Around the inside are little rooms with one small window to each which are to keep their furs and fur stores, trading shops, et cetera. The upper story, with a portico on the north side and steps running from the court, is the apartment of Captain Grant, the English Agent. On the west side of the fort, 150 yards distant, runs the Snake River, which furnishes water to the Fort. On the opposite side [the east side of the fort] is a slough which extends around the back part of it, making a moat around except in front. (Bryarly)



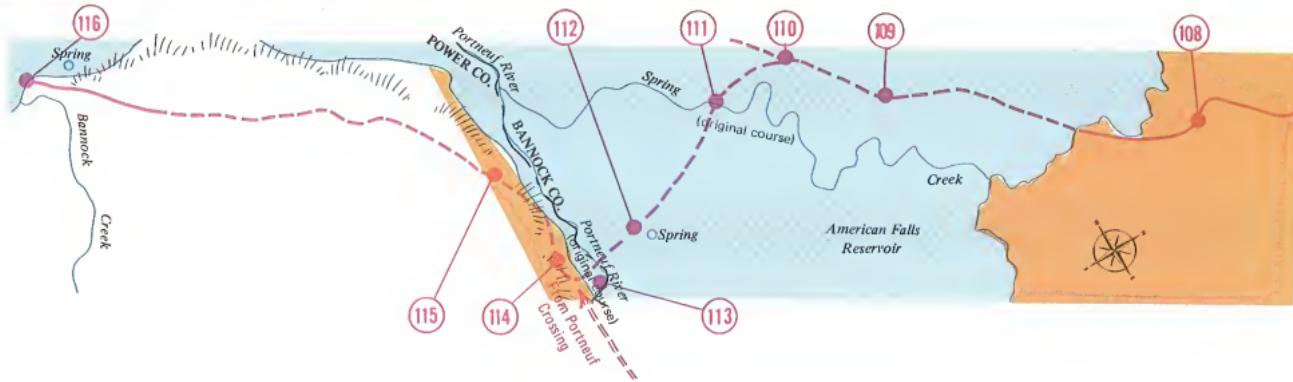
Lithograph of Fort Hall, October, 1849, from the report of Major Osborne Cross.

108. We rode off on a slight trail in the grass in a S[outh] E[ast] direction [from the fort] — trending to the S[outh] and S[outh] by W[est] over rich plains of tall beautiful grass, to a bend of the Panack River [Spring Creek]. Here it is broad and shallow, with little current. (Bruff)



Sketch of Fort Hall, made in  
August, 1849, by J.G. Bruff.





After leaving Fort Hall, the road enters the area now flooded by the water of the American Falls Reservoir. Much of the route has been established from maps of the Snake River bottoms made by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation prior to the flooding.

109. *The Pannack [Spring Creek and Portneuf River] runs down the valley for 20 miles and empties into the Snake River above the American Falls. In many places where the river [Spring Creek] makes bends, they come within a quarter mile of each other. . . Our road continued down the valley for four miles, crossing and recrossing them [meanders of Spring Creek or sloughs from abandoned meanders] often. In many places they looked smooth, quiet and peaceable on top, and upon entering you found them dirty, ugly. . . (Bryarly)*

Then the emigrants had two choices, again depending upon the season of the year and the level of the water. Most turned southward:

110. *This road is a new one, having been made by the emigration this spring. The old road went down the valley [between Snake and Portneuf Rivers] which is 20 miles long, but on account of the flood of the early spring, was impassable. (Bryarly)*

111. *Three miles and a half [from Fort Hall] brought us to Portneuf or*

*Pannack River (Spring Creek) which we crossed. . . The river was 75 yards wide. . . with a gravelly bottom. (Bryarly)*

112. *. . . pass a lake right of road [slough of Spring Creek], and excellent spring [to the] left of [the] road. (McAllister)*

113. *We reached the Portneuf River, the water of which being high. . . At this place. . . the river is some 40 yards wide and 4 feet deep. After crossing we ascended a very steep hill to the upland in order to avoid the swampy ground which lies about the [Portneuf] river for a great many miles. (Berrien)*

Once upon the bluffs, south of the Portneuf River, another crossroad is encountered, though few diarists realized it. Here, coming from the east, along the bluff, was the road from the Portneuf crossing which had been taken by those Oregon-bound travellers who did not wish to go to Fort Hall.

Also, the pack trail from Salt Lake City, via Dairy Creek, entered the Snake River Bottoms here, having come southward from Dairy Creek:

114. *The road turns down the [Portneuf] river and keep[s] at no great distance from it for several miles, but is separated by a very steep bank. (McAllister)*

115. This ridge was covered with artemesia, and in other respects [was] a sandy, barren place. The road was very dusty and dry, and run[s] along the edge of the bluff overlooking the valley. Upon the opposite side you had in view three well marked, very distinct buttes, being distant from one another perhaps 10 miles. In the valley you had in view the Snake River, or Lewis Fork of the Columbia, being nearest the opposite bank, then the Portneth [Portneuf] or Pannack [Bannock], taking its name from the Pannack Tribe of Shoshonees who reside principally upon it [actually Spring Creek]. And then we have in view the last stream we crossed which has no name [Portneuf River] and comes from a large spring half a mile above our crossing. (Bryarly)

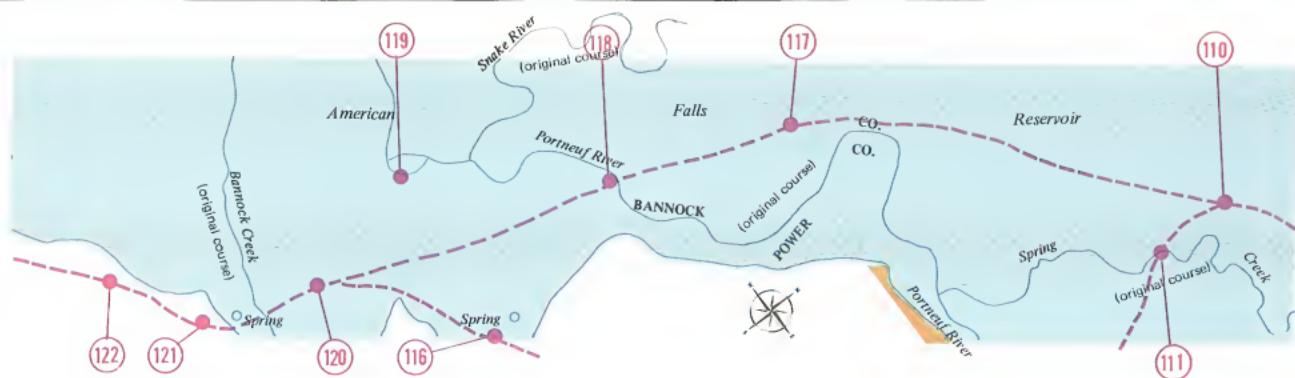


View northward across the Snake River Bottoms, taken from the bluff. Portneuf River in foreground. Picture taken 1922. Courtesy U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

116. Road joins the bottom's bank . . . Descend the bank or bluff; the [Snake or Portneuf] river is off to the right some distance. (McAllister)



The descent to Bannock Creek. The trail enters in the gully at lower left, courses down the gully and turns left along the first brush line.



Depending upon the season of the year, and if the water was low, some of the travellers elected to take a higher, drier route along the natural levee between Spring Creek and Snake River rather than turning south. For instance:

117. After leaving the fort, we travelled seven miles. . . We met several large trains turning back to go five miles further upstream to ford. They told us it was impossible to cross at this point, as the water was so deep, with sloughs on its banks. (Hanna)

The road crosses the Portneuf near its junction with Snake River; Parrish did not recognize this because he writes:

118. . .crossed the Lewis [Portneuf] river here today, eight or nine miles below Fort Hall. It is a small stream here, but soon gets to be twice as large. (Parrish)

119. We travelled ten miles [from Fort Hall] camping on Snake River just below the mouth of the Portneuf. . . (Talbot)

The two roads met near here but no traveller apparently noticed this junction. The area was very flat, was woven with many streams and contained numerous roads leading to camping areas. It is easy to see why the junction was ignored in the maze.

120. The road turns to the left and keeps under the bluff, leaving a spring and swamp to the right. (McAllister)

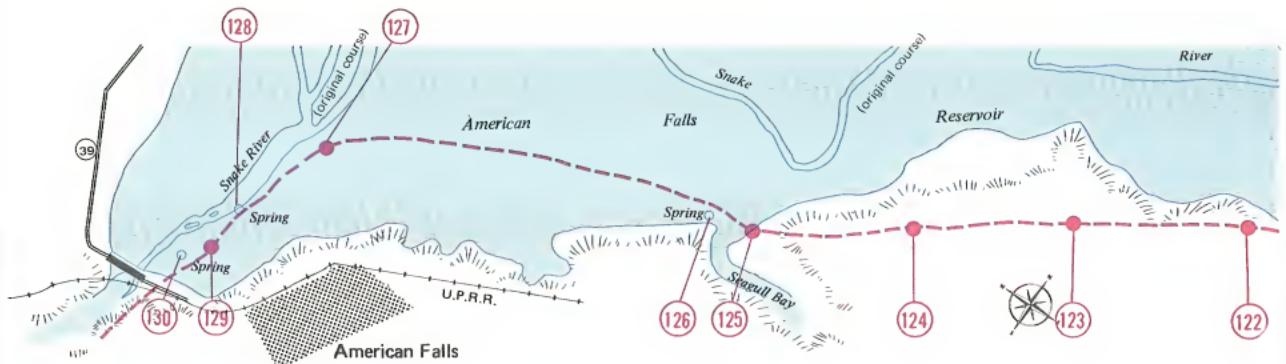
121. . .reached a creek (branch of Panack [Bannock] Creek), crossed and found a snug position at the base of a table-land with bluffs – about 40 feet high, and ranging S[south] W[est] and N[north] E[east] as far as we could see. These are the outlays of the mountains. . . It will be seen that S[south] W[est] of us, the stream washed the foot of the bluff and that on the other side [of camp to the northeast] a large spring, of clear cool water was so near the foot of the bluff that we could just lead the animals by it, on firm ground. . .road up the bluffs. (Bruff)

The ascent from Bannock Creek has been altered by the waves from the American Falls reservoir. A very steep cliff is now present.

122. The road continues near the bluffs. (McAllister)



Bannock Creek Valley, taken  
in 1922, looking toward the  
ascent. (Bureau of Reclamation  
photo)



From Bannock Creek, the road ascended to the table-land along the river and continued on it to avoid the marshes and sloughs of the river; it then returns to the bottoms:

123. . .after crossing the Pannack [Bannock], the road continued along the uplands. . . (Fremont)
124. We then continued down the valley of Snake or Lewis River throughout the day. We travelled on the second bench, or bottom. . . (Hale)
125. We rolled upon the same ridge seven miles, when we descended the bluff [Seagull Bay], and came to a beautiful bottom, [Snake River Valley]. . . (Brydaly)
126. Stopped. . .at a spring at the foot of the bluff. . . The Snake River bottom is still wide, but has many sloughs and the river winds about in it wonderfully. (Zeiber)
127. The river [road] continues in the bottom and joins Snake River. Snake River at this place is a beautiful stream, smooth surface, between  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile wide. . . The bottom is narrow. . . (McAllister)

128. . .about 5 miles further [from the Seagull Bay descent] we saw six or seven large springs within a short distance of each other on [the] river side, or on what appeared to be a bench of it formed by the springs, two of them on the opposite side of the branch, and most of them boiling up fully as strong as the Soda Springs. . . (Zeiber)

129. . .encamped. . .at the upper end of a group of islands, about half a mile above the American Falls of Snake River. . . The river here enters between low mural banks, which consist of a fine vesicular trap rock [basalt], the intermediate portions being compact and crystalline. Gradually becoming higher in its downward course, these banks of scoriated volcanic rock form, with occasional interruptions, its characteristic feature along the whole line to the Dalles of the Lower Columbia, resembling a chasm which had been rent through the country, and which the river had afterwards taken for its bed. The immediate valley of the river is a high plain, covered with black rocks. . . (Fremont)

130. About  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile further is another spring near the water's edge. (McAllister)

# TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP

OF THE

## ROAD FROM MISSOURI TO OREGON

COMMENCING AT THE MOUTH OF THE KANSAS IN THE MISSOURI RIVER  
AND ENDING AT THE MOUTH OF THE WALLAH WALLAH IN THE COLUMBIA

### In VII Sections

#### SECTION V

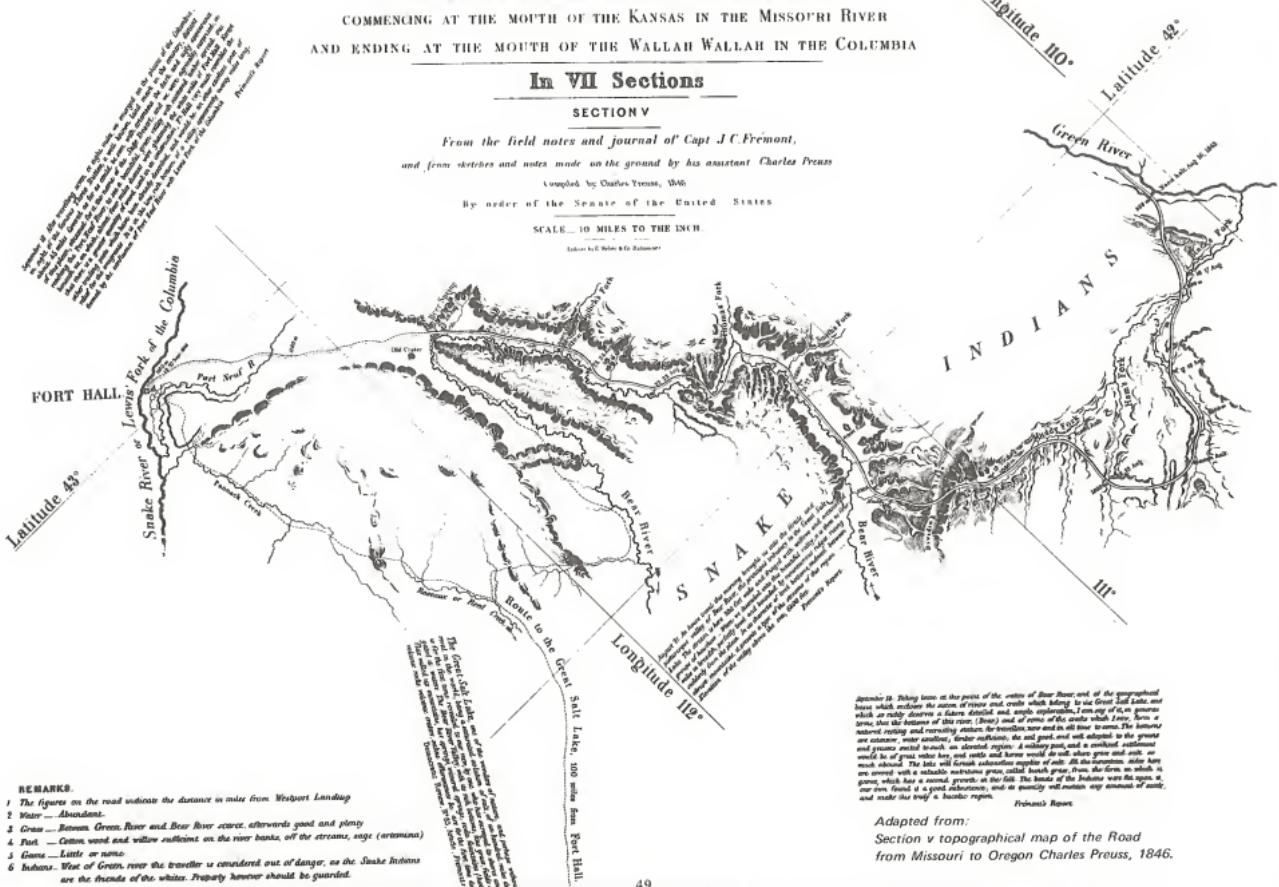
From the field notes and journal of Capt J C Fremont,  
and from sketches and notes made on the ground by his assistant Charles Preuss

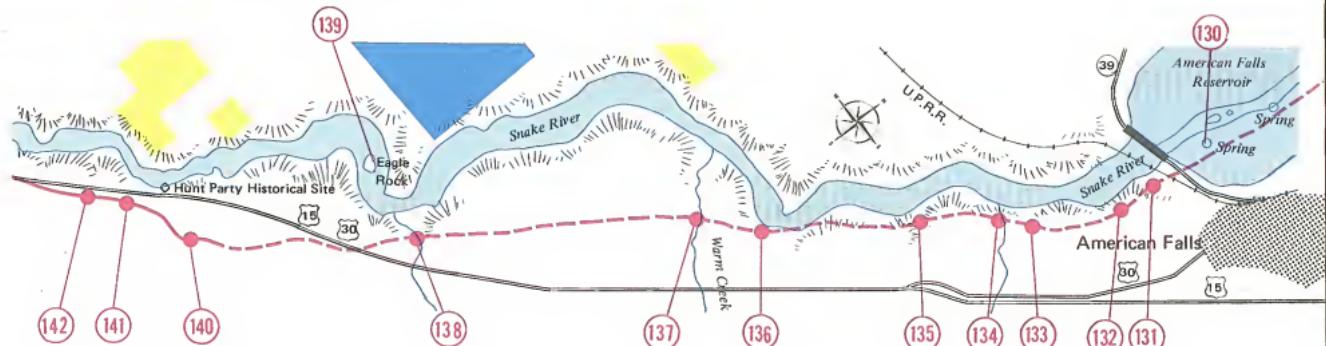
Compiled by Charles Preuss, 1846

By order of the Senate of the United States

SCALE—10 MILES TO THE INCH

Engraved by C. Preuss & Co. Baltimore





From here, the Snake River enters a canyon and the road leaves its immediate banks. While very attractive, to the traveller it was trouble:

131. . .the American Falls. The sound of [the falls] was heard some time before reaching them. . . The scene was truly magnificent. Here was an entire change in the face of the country as well as the river. But a few miles back we had looked on it running quietly through a wide, fertile valley and winding around islands studded with trees. Now [the river] became contracted to a space of not more than four hundred yards and in a short distance was precipitated over huge rocks to resume its course through a deep canyon, the perpendicular walls of which were formed of basaltic rock. In the center of the falls there is a ledge of rocks dividing the river into two parts, which has a few scattering dwarf cedars on it that seem to spring from the crevices of the rocks and are nourished by what little earth is found upon them. Between the right bank and this ledge, the column of water, after being whirled among the rocks, has a perpendicular fall of about 8 feet. That on the left is much less, and [the river] finds its way below by passing round and over large masses of rock that lie in its way, until it reaches nearly the base, where [there] is a small fall of a few feet high. While the right bank commences to rise quite high and perpendicular, the left bank is somewhat broken with shelving rocks projecting over the water. (Cross)



Lithograph of the American Falls of the Snake River, 1849  
from the report of Major Osborn C. Cross.

132. A few hundred yards below the falls, and on the left bank of the river is the escarpment [American Falls Cemetery] . . . (Fremont)

133. The road passed along the bluff, bending to the right, which soon caused us to lose sight of the falls. (Cross)

Near this are scattered on the ground black volcanic debris [obsidian], resembling somewhat anthracite coal, but which is merely melted matter, thrown to the surface. (Delano)

134. For the first seven miles [from American Falls] the road was very rough and hilly; at one very short pitch [Ferry Hollow] we had to lock both hind wheels and then attach a rope to the hind end of the wagon-box and hold them back for safety. (Crawford)

135. The table-land slopes from the mountains to the river and makes high and abrupt banks. This table-land does not appear to be as fertile as it is on the mountains. . . (Allyn)

136. The road is very dusty and broken in places by large ravines; the road continues near the river; the river has no bottom, the bluffs having closed in on it. (McAllister)

137. After passing the [American] fall[s] a few miles we came to a small creek [Warm Creek], sufficiently large, however, to turn a mill, and I have no recollections of ever seeing a better mill seat; the falls was so great. (Hale)

138. . . .the road soon led to, or near to the river. The place where we neared it was worthy of note. It passed through the mountain. It [the mountain] seemed to have opened to let the river pass there, being high cliffs on each side. I went over one of them while the wagons went around the west [southwest] side. The rocks were black and appeared to have been almost melted [basalt]. It is, no doubt, the effect of some volcanic eruption. (Hale)

Snake River entering lava-bound canyon south of American Falls, looking southwest.



139. The river today has been much broken up by the rapids. Since leaving the [American] falls they are frequently met with. One of these I observed is very beautiful. Here there is an island in the middle of the river about a quarter of a mile long, which seemed to be one mass of rock . . . The rapids commenced about half a mile above it and forming a series of small falls, passing on both sides of the island with much rapidity and force of current, continued in this way for about half a mile below it [Eagle Rock]. The growth on the island . . . the beauty of the rapids, the deep canyon through which the river passes, and the surrounding scenery, so different from any passed before, made the whole landscape there one of beauty and interest. (Cross)

140. In this day's march we crossed many gorges or deep ravines that were much broken and very difficult to travel over. They were the outlets to the streams from the hills, are often very miry, and the hills which we ascended very sandy and difficult to get over. (Cross)

141. On the left bank, the ground, although much broken, is not so rough and there are many places where you are able to drive your train or take your horses to water . . . As there is no way of heading the ravines, they were obliged to be crossed, and we did but little during the day except cross one ravine to come soon to another, so that [the afternoon] had passed away before we reached our encampment. (Cross)

142. Here we are near the river, which at this place is very narrow, making its way between huge boulders. (Crawford)

The banks of the river here is [are] well marked, being of high rocky bluffs, resembling those of the beautiful Hudson River. (Bryarly)

Looking northwestward, down Snake River from the Hunt Party Historical Site.

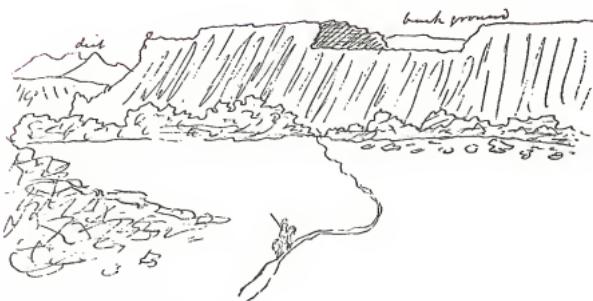






This section of the trail follows along on the bench above Snake River for a way, and then descends gradually to the river.

143. We passed over a plain, enclosed apparently circularly, with high and very crude volcanic rocks and seemed like the mouth of a large crater-filled up [Massacre Rocks]. On our right, outside this walled up area, we could see the perpendicular basaltic banks of the river, the high dark wall very regular, with a rock at an angle-looking like the turret sentry box on the walls of a castle. Between this, and the rocks near our right, the river had a narrow passage—a sort of canon. (Bruff)



Sketch by J.G. Bruff in 1849 of Massacre Rocks area on the Snake River, from the east. The notch in the skyline is an ancient abandoned waterfall of the Snake River.

144. . . .the road came to the river and [we] encamped, being in sight of the gap in the mountain [Massacre Rock]. (Hale)

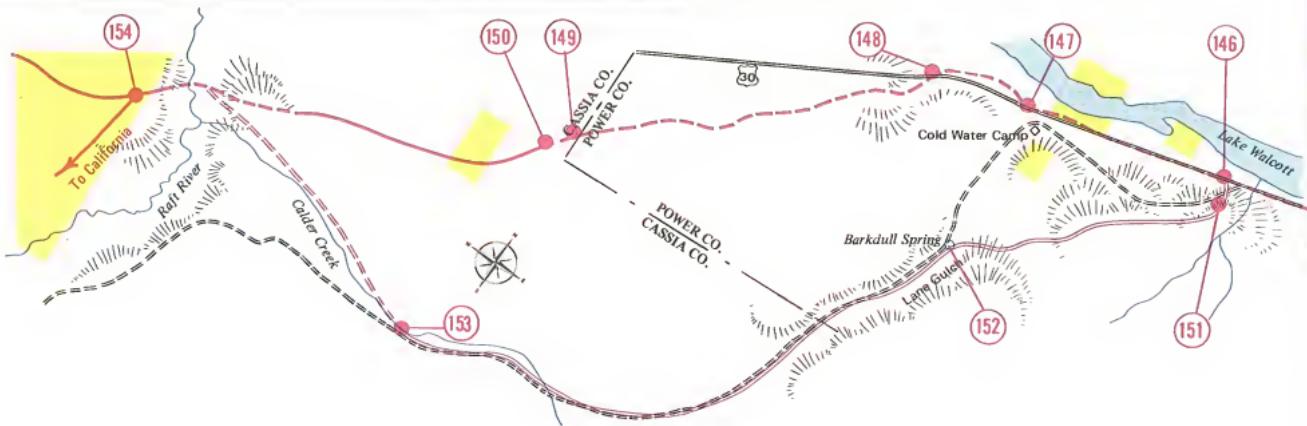
145. . . .encamped. . . near the river, on a rock creek [Rock Creek], the bed of which was entirely occupied with boulders of a very large size. For the last three or four miles the right bank of the river has had a palisaded appearance. (Fremont)

146. . . .in about 4 miles we reached a picturesque stream, to which we gave the name Fall Creek. It is remarkable for the many falls which occur in a short distance; and its bed is composed of calcareous tufa, or vegetable rock, composed principally of the remains of reeds and mosses. . . (Fremont)



. . . crossed a small stream full of falls. The only place where we could cross was just on the edge of the rocks above one of the falls. (Whitman)





The passage from Fall Creek to Raft River was generally uneventful. The travellers once again had two choices, most of them took the northern route, along the Snake river for a way:

147. *The best camp is two miles farther. [here he is referring to what is now Coldwater Camp] (Palmer)*

148. *Within one half mile of our encampment [Coldwater Camp] . . . we bid a final adieu to Lewis's Fork of the Columbia [Snake] River and struck across the hills for some distance. . . (Pritchard)*

because:

*. . . a large island crowded the river through a narrow passage, forcing the trail over the bluffs. (Bruff)*

149. *. . . then six miles over the sage plain. . . (Crawford)*

150. . . .to the head of another ravine, which we followed down to the bottom of the stream, called Raft River. (Crawford)

Some travellers, however, took a different route. This was first recognized in 1843 when Fremont wrote:

151. *The road along the river bluffs had been occasionally very bad; and imagining that some rough obstacles rendered such a detour necessary, we followed for several miles a plain wagon road leading up to this stream [Fall Creek], until we reached a point whence it could be seen making directly towards a low place in the range on the south side of the valley, and we became immediately aware that we were on a trail formed by a party of wagons. . . proceeding to upper California. . . we . . . regained the line along the river. . . (Fremont)*

Fremont, wanting to go to Oregon, had turned back, but Cross actually took the route:

*On the opposite side of this little brook [Fall Creek] the hill was so steep as sometimes to require 16 mules to a wagon and as many men as could get hold of a rope to get it to the top. (Cross)*

The route in the diaries can usually be recognized because the travellers come to a spring, Barkdull Spring, after leaving the river at Fall Creek:

152. *The road here turns short to the left up a ravine and leaves the Lewis Fork [Snake River]. . . Cooper Spring branches [Barkdull Spring] a short distance. . . Road now runs over a sage desert [Calder Creek Valley] to a small creek 1½ rods wide [Raft River]. (Athearn)*
153. *. . .passing through a rough gorge [Lane's Gulch] and afterwards over level plains [Calder Creek Valley] through the day. We crossed Ogden's [Raft] River. . . (Cross)*

Both routes entered the Raft River Valley at about the same place:

154. *. . .descended into the bottom of Raft River. It was a small stream with a smooth, strong current and gravelly bed. . .it is at the crossing of this stream that the Oregon and California roads separate. (Pritchard)*

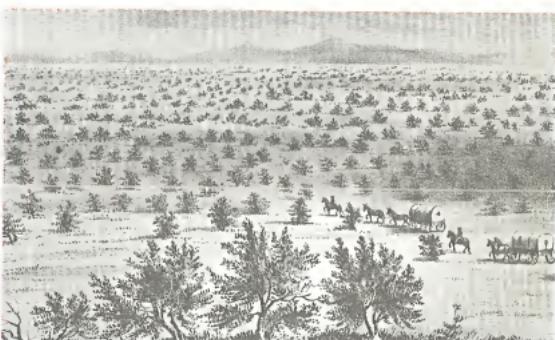


The passage westward from Raft River was, and still is, a dry, barren sage plain:

155. . . travelled three miles. . . road. . . very rough and rocky. (Conyers)

156. After passing over a plain about 5 miles wide, we ascended a steep hill by the assistance of soldiers, which was the only obstacle met with during the day. (Cross)

157. The road is very rough between Casha Creek [Raft River] and the springs [Marsh Creek]. (Cranstone)



Lithograph. View on Snake  
River artemesia plain. Major  
Osborne Cross, 1849.

Many travellers say about the same thing:

158. *The road . . . has been dreadful rough occasioned by rocks which have been thrown in every direction by the power of the volcano which I assure you has had its day of triumph all through this part of the world. . .not many hills, but the roads have been rocky and very dusty.*  
*(Pengra)*

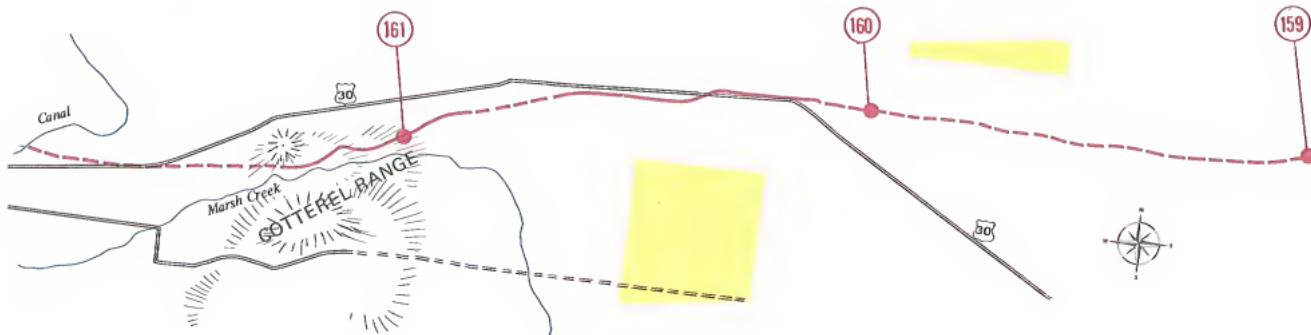
*To all appearance this land was burnt up once. At some places there will be a surface of black stone [basalt], and it looks like thick black molasses for some rods square, just as if it had boiled and bubbled for months. . . (Geer)*

*. . . fifteen miles without water. . .rough road over rocks varying from the size of a piece of chalk up to a fence block, and so thick that they kept the wagon constantly upon the jump. . . (Adams)*

159. *The road today was not much hilly, but very rocky and rough. . .no water between [Raft River] and [Marsh] Creek. (Renshaw)*



Sagebrush plain, looking westward from Raft River.



Continuing across the sagebrush desert, the travellers hurried westward toward Marsh Creek, the first water for 18 miles since leaving Raft River:

160. *This day we travelled about 15 miles, the road has been stoney and dusty. . .(Palmer)*

Marsh Creek, flowing northward and westward from the mountains, entered a low basin in the lava field and presented the appearance of a swamp, or lake before flowing outward from it. Most descriptions say the same thing:

161. . .*Rushes or deep creek [Marsh Creek] . . .is ten feet wide [and] 4 feet deep. . . Turn well up the creek; you will here find water. . do not cross here. . .(McAllister)*

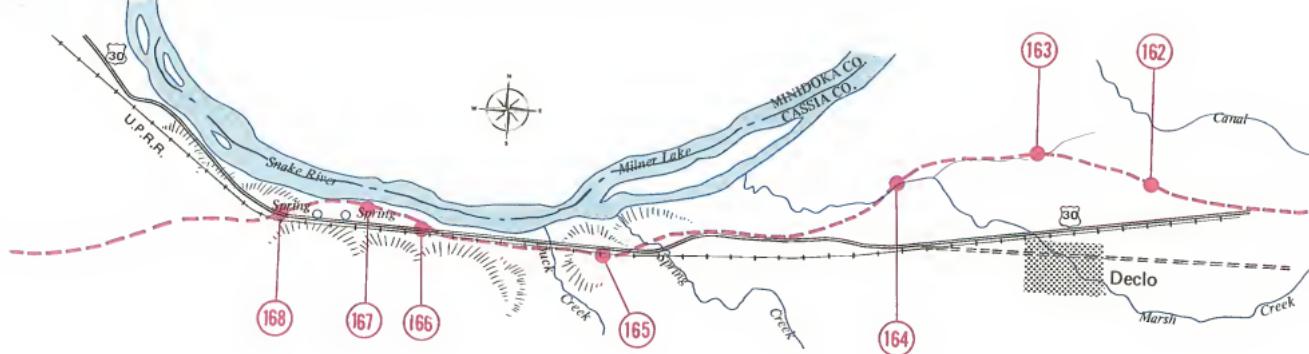
. . .*Bullrush Creek [Marsh Creek], a very swampy place. (Adams)*

*Our road was over a rocky sage brush desert, but is a little better around these springs. (Kerns)*

*This is the first water since leaving Raft River. (Conyers)*

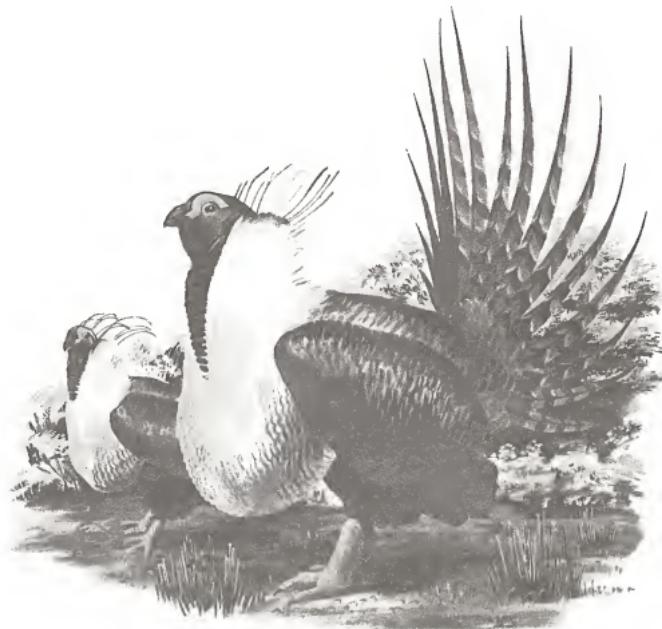


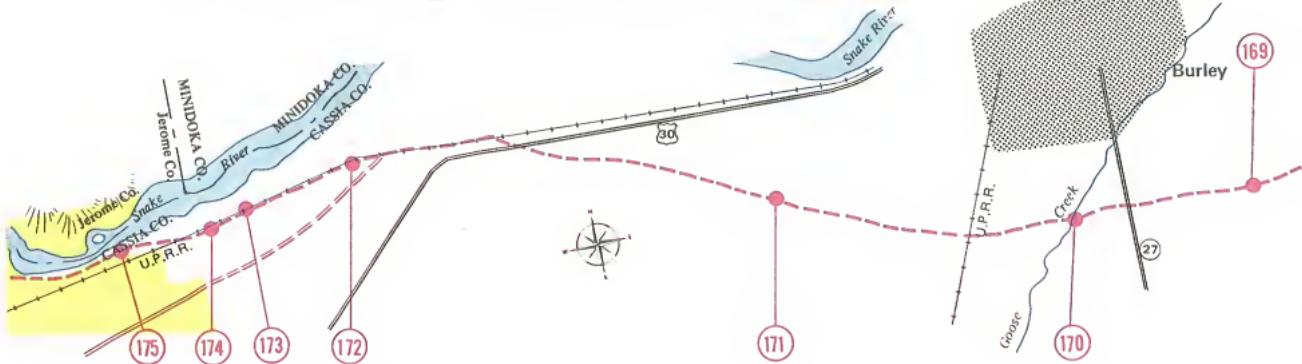
Aerial photograph of the Oregon Trail crossing the sagebrush desert and coming to Marsh Creek. Note the present-day highway. Date of photo 1940. North is to the top of the picture.



Traveling along Marsh Creek, the emigrants headed westward toward Snake River:

162. . .travelled down Marsh Creek for three miles. . .(Conyers)
163. Drove four miles round the springs [along Marsh Creek] to a little stream. . .(Cranstone)
164. . .follow down it about 8 miles to the crossing. . .The /Snake/ river is to the right about  $\frac{1}{4}$  miles. . .(McAllister)  
*[Marsh Creek] – one rod wide, two feet deep, good crossing. . .(Belshaw)*
165. . .2 miles further we come quite close to Snake River. . .(Goltra)
166. Road joins the river after crossing 4 dry ravines and going down the bluff. (McAllister)
167. Snake River bottom is to your right hand about 200 yards. (Belshaw)
168. . .here the road runs on the bottom about a mile and then raises the bluffs. . .(Belshaw)





After leaving Snake River bottom, where the river turns northerly, the travellers continue westward:

169. . . over a tolerably fair road [to Goose Creek]. (Field)

170. The country, except along the creeks, is a dry, ashy sage plain, destitute of timber. The road is filled with dust that fills the wagon tracks like water. (Crawford)

171. Crossed dry and rocky plain. (Howell)

. . . camped some three miles west of Goose Creek, in the sand and sage. . . (Sharp)

The Snake River turns southward:

172. . . from thence [Goose Creek] we travelled to the [Snake] river again. . . good road. . . (Renshaw)

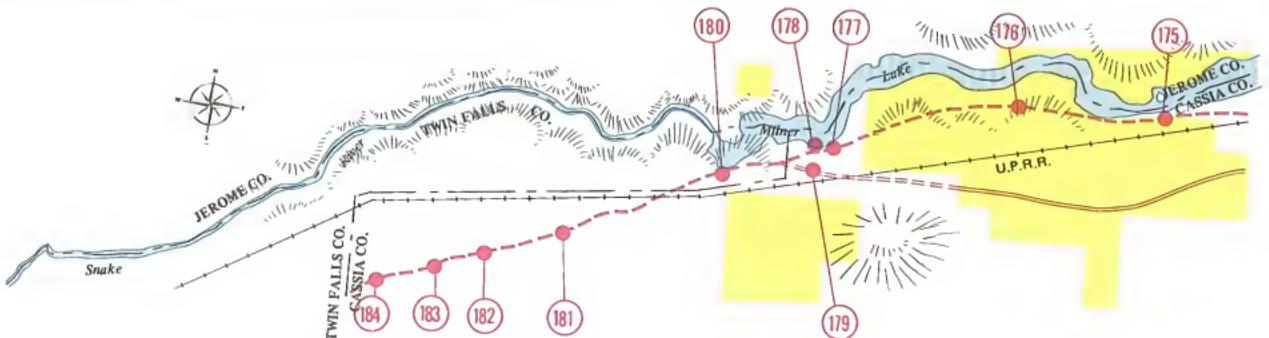
173. Travelled down it. . . The river here assumes a broad, placid, and beautiful appearance, the water being very clear, unlike any of the rivers in the western states [i.e., western U.S. in 1843 was Missouri]. (Nesmith)

174. That pretty little lake mentioned yesterday I think must have been the Snake River, which again came up this noon. The reason of my mistaking it for a lake was that we happened to strike it where the banks were low, its channel broad and deep, giving it a very moderate current, which caused it to present the appearance of a lake. (Field)

175. . . a fall in the river about 2 miles. . . In reaching this you pass rock island which is a huge mass of rock surrounded by water. (McAllister)

. . . we were glad. . . when we found a sheltered camp, where there was an abundance of wood, at some elevated rocky islands covered with cedar, near the commencement of another long canon of the river. With the exception of a short detention at a deep little stream called Goose Creek, and some occasional rocky places, we had today a very good road; but the country has a barren appearance, sandy and densely covered with artemesia from the banks of the river to the foot of the mountains. (Fremont)





Here the river enters another canyon, and the trail again diverges from the river:

176. . . started again, and of all the rocky roads, this day's travel is the worst. (Goltra)

177. Had a very dusty and rough road til noon, when we reached the river again. (Adams)

178. I am now seated on the bank of the [Snake] river upon a ledge of rocks which form a kind of natural sofa. The river here runs through a rocky canyon. The current is remarkably swift and the water tumbles over the rocks with a roaring noise. The scenery here is of a truly wild and romantic description. Huge piles of rocks rise up in bold array around me. . . Off in a northeastern direction from me [is] a seemingly endless sage plain. . . (Duniway)

It is suspected that some travellers did not head westward by way of the rocky, river-edge road, but rather kept farther to the south, which, while less rocky, was drier. These travellers' diaries can be recognized as they pass from Goose Creek to Dry Creek (still farther west) without encountering any rocky road. Some examples are:

179. Aug. 25, 1852 Snake River. . . very warm and dusty; made 18 miles; crossed Goose Creek.

Aug. 26 Laid up

Aug. 27 Warm and dusty; made 22 miles to Split Rock [Dry] creek; warm nights. (Davis)

Aug. 6, 1845 Went about 14 miles today over a tolerably fair road, camping on Goose Creek. . . nooned alongside of a pretty little lake [Snake River] . . .

Aug. 7 Travelled about 18 miles today, camping upon dry fork [Dry Creek] of Snake River, the water of which stands along in pond holes. (Field)

After the roads join:

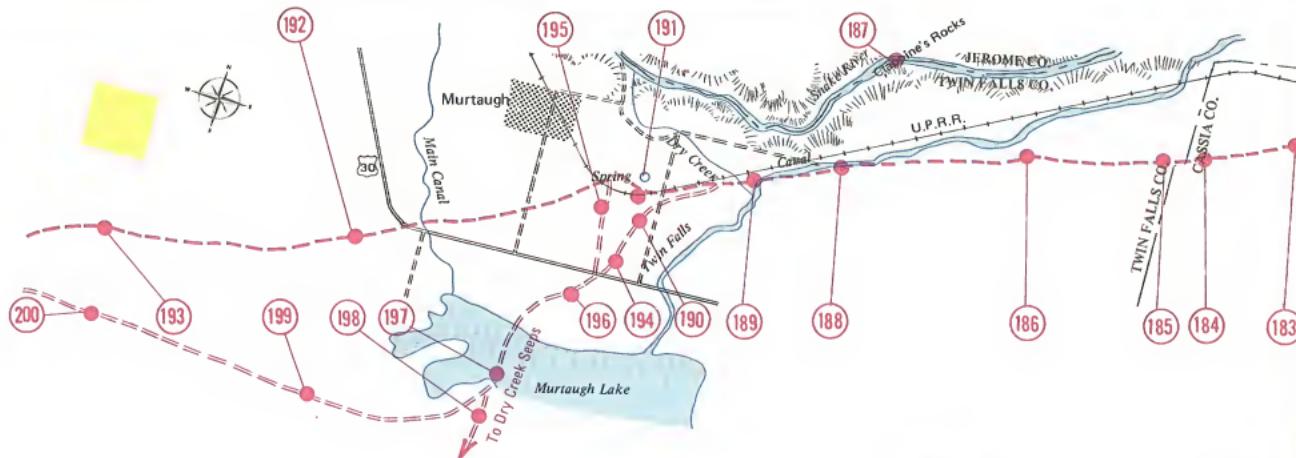
180. . . A watering place about 2½ [miles]; by close observation this may be found. The river has precipitous banks, in places 200 feet of rock perpendicular. At this place [stock] may be driven down with a little difficulty, having to go over large [rocks]. Water your stock here, as you may not find another place accessible. (McAllister)

181. The road soon leaves the river; drove about two miles. . .after ascending a rise. . .The road is not rocky now. (McAllister)

182. The road we travelled was very dusty. . .(Palmer)

183. We then came to good road again and travelled to Dry Creek. (Renshaw)

184. The road lay along the bank of Sanke river nearly all day, which still continued to pass through a deep canyon of perpendicular rock [which] appeared to have been made by some convulsion of nature, apparently simply to give room for the waters of Snake River, for the country on the opposite side was as dry and sterile as on the side we were travelling. We passed several islands during the morning. . .which, with the rapids about them, presented quite a picturesque appearance. (Cross)



The road leaves Snake River, and continues along the table-land toward Dry Creek, where another decision must be made:

185. . . entering after this a sandy country, it [the road] became very good. . All the day the course of the river has been between walls of the black volcanic rock [basalt], a dark line of the escarpment on the opposite side pointing out its course, and sweeping along in foam at places where the mountains which border its valley present always on the left two ranges, the lower one a spur of the higher. . (Fremont)
186. In our march this day I attempted to get down to the river to procure a drink of water, but for six miles was unable to do so, owing to the steep precipitous banks. (Palmer)
187. Saw a place on the [Snake] river where the water rushes through a narrow channel or passageway not more than 20 feet wide, emptying with a slight fall into a sort of circular basin [Clappine, rocks]. (Talbot)

Narrow Snake River at Clappine's Rocks.



188. . . from where the road strikes the river to a dry creek 9 miles; the river is to your right 80 rods. (Belshaw)

189. . . here the river runs through a rocky canyon. The cliffs are sometimes the height of 1000 feet, and nearly perpendicular. Above the canyon the river is two or three hundred yards wide; but at this place it is not more than 150 feet. (Palmer)

190. Dry, or Pool Creek. No water except in pools. . .(McAllister)

191. On the right hand side of the road, in the bed of the creek, there is a small spring. (Renshaw)

The Great American Falls are about two miles north of this place, but I was too busy to visit them. They are said to be 700 feet of perpendicular descent. They sounded like a continuous roar of distant thunder. . . (Crawford)

The roar of Caldron Linn about 1½ miles north might be heard from Dry Creek, but the identity of the Great American Falls is unclear. Shoshone Falls, higher than Niagara, are over 10 miles downstream.

After crossing Dry Creek, most went southwestward toward Rock Creek:

192. . . roads. . .rocky and dusty. (Duniway)

193. From thence [Dry Creek] we travelled to Rock Creek. . .good road. . . (Renshaw)

However, if Dry Creek was dry, many travellers turned up it, southward, looking for water.

194. . . go about half a mile [up it] before crossing. (McAllister)

Some crossed it and then turned south:

195. We crossed this and took a left hand road and in a short time found a good camp. (Duniway)

196. . .up the creek one mile (Crawford)

197. . . no running water in this creek; only water standing in pools. . .by driving our cattle nearly 2 miles up this creek we found. . .grass. . . (Conyers)

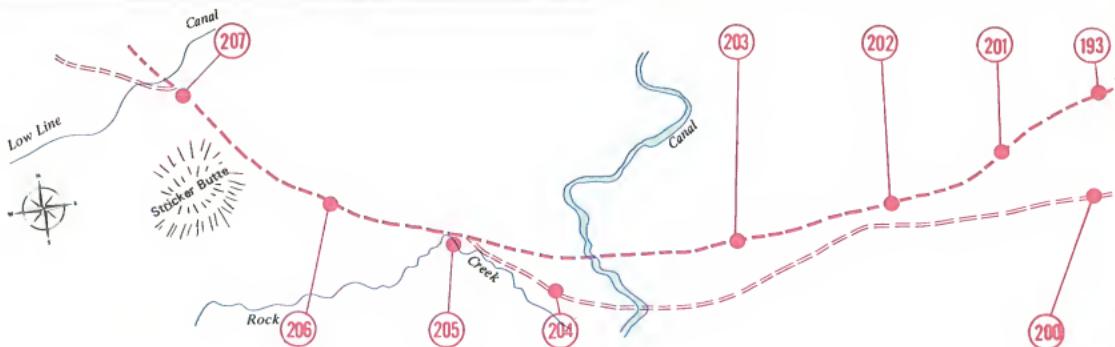
Those that went up Dry Creek looking for water turned westward south of the main trail and did not join it until eight miles later at Rock Creek. Some went even farther south, up Dry Creek, well into the mountain:

198. . .proceeded up about a mile further [after having gone 2 miles upstream from where she first crossed it]. . . Proceeded up the creek for about 3 miles [more] for the sake of water. Here we found it coming out from between the mountains, quite a stream, but it soon sinks away in the sand. . .Country generally very sterile and sandy, and a great many rocky hills. . .(Adams)

. . . started for Rock Creek, and had to retrace our three miles we travelled upstream [Dry Creek], and nine miles more [to Rock Creek]. (Adams)

199. . . .to Rock Creek. Road unusually level. . .(Conyers)

200. . . from here [Dry Creek] to Rock Creek 10 miles. Good road. (Belshaw)



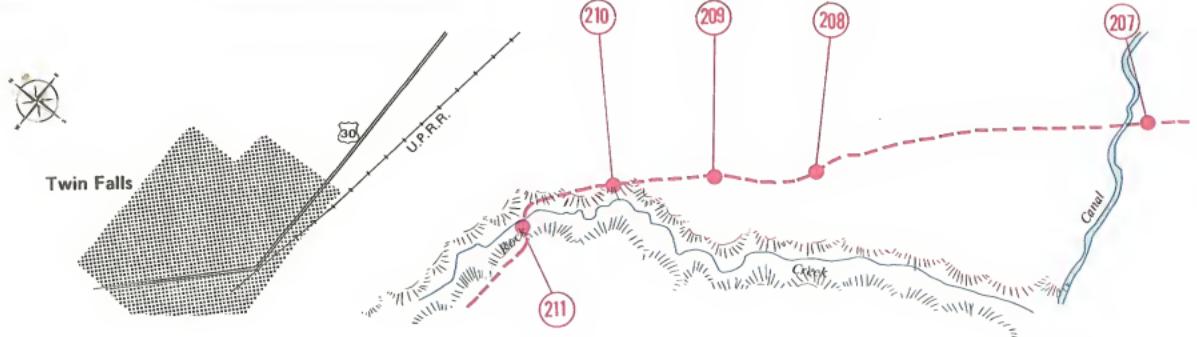
Everyone now travelled westward toward Rock Creek, well south of the Snake River:

- 201. *The road lay over a sage plain to the bottom on Rock Creek. (Palmer)*
- 202. *A sage plain and dusty road to Muscle Creek [Rock Creek] (McAllister)*
- 203. *...eight miles to Rock Creek. (Crawford)*

Those taking the southern route approached Rock Creek first and got into the influence of the erosion by the creek:

- 204. *...the last part was quite rocky.*
- 205. *...arrived at Rock Creek and continued down its banks to a bend where the road diverges. .(Cross)*
- 206. *Our road today led down the creek. (Crawford)*
- 207. *The road runs on the north [and east] side till crossing. .(McAllister)*





The route now turns northward, along the east side of Rock Creek, heading for a place to cross it and to Snake River:

208. Most of the road was good and level. (Renshaw)
209. Rock Creek is a small stream which comes from the neighboring hills and falls into Snake River having for an outlet a very deep canyon, from where we made our encampment to the river. The stream itself is not more than 15 feet wide. The canyon through which it passes is in many places from 50 to 100 feet high and varying in width from one hundred to two hundred yards. . In other places it becomes so narrow as to exclude everything in the way of vegetation. (Cross)
210. In its progress towards the [Snake] river, this creek soon enters a chasm of the volcanic rock, which in places along the wall presents a columnar appearance; and the road becomes extremely rocky whenever it passes near its banks. (Fremont)

There is a passage down into Rock Creek Canyon just south of Twin Falls city limits:

211. It [Rock Creek] is only about 20 feet wide where the road crosses it, with a deep bed, and steep banks covered with rocky fragments. . The soil appears to be full of calcareous matter, with which the rocks are incrusted [caliche]. (Fremont)

Rock Creek descent into canyon, looking northward from the south side.



Miss Ketcham comments:

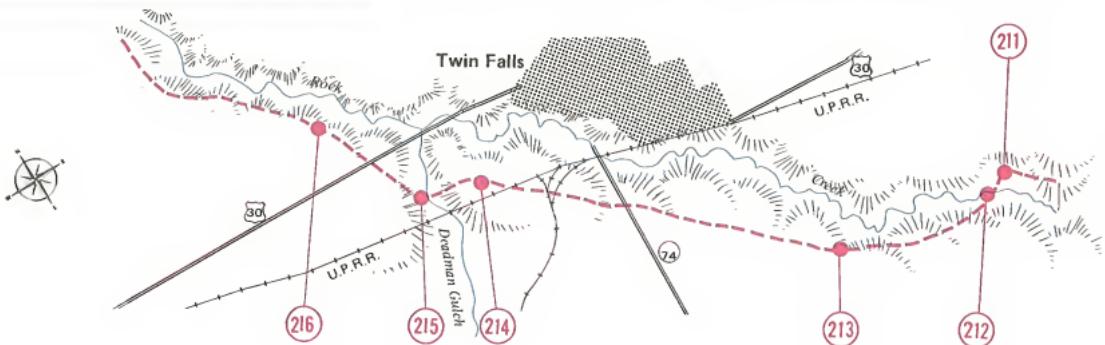
*In getting down we had to jump from rock to rock, worse than a [flight] of stairs. When down by the creek you seem surrounded by a great stone wall. (Ketcham)*

The crossing, as bad as it was, apparently must have been the best one—there were others, but few crossed elsewhere:

*Rock Creek has very high, steep, rocky banks, and in the course of the 12 miles we have travelled we have travelled we have found only two places where a wagon could cross it. . . (Adams)*

and the very observant Dr. McAllister writes:

*Crossing about 8 miles [from where it is struck] at [a] steep rocky bluff on both sides. About 2½ miles below [above?] here is another crossing. (McAllister)*



After crossing Rock Creek, the Oregonians continue north and west along the west side of the canyon:

- 212. *The fragments of rock which had been removed by the emigrants in making a road when we ascended from the bed of this creek were whitened with lime. . .(Fremont)*
- 213. *. . .crossed over and went down the other side 2 miles. . .This creek had very high bluffs; hard to get the cattle down to the bottom. (Belshaw)*
- 214. *. . .crossed Rock Creek, and travelled to where the road runs near the creek. (Renshaw)*

Wherever the road approached the canyon, the road was altered noticeably:

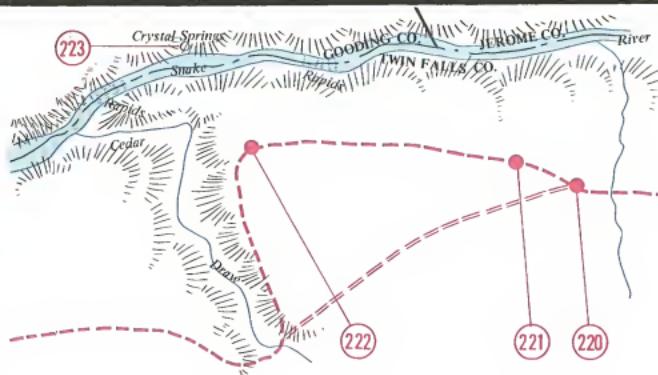
- 215. *. . .we came near Rock Creek again and found a place where with difficulty we succeeded in getting our cattle to the water. . . The roads were rough and stony [Deadman Gulch]. (Duniway)*
- . . .struck another creek [Deadman Gulch] over the worst road that ever a white man travelled. Rock as large as a flour barrel are nothing to get over along here. . .(Goltra)*

And then, after leaving the canyon area:

- 216. *. . .six miles over a good road. . .(Conyers)*

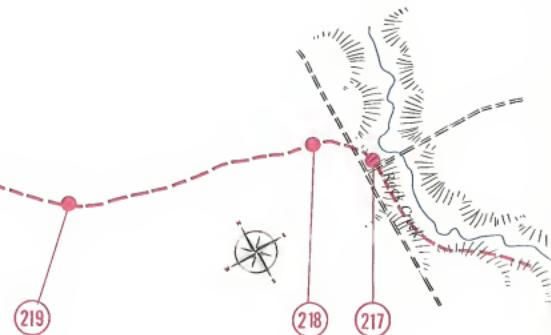






Here the travellers leave Rock Creek Canyon and make for Snake River again:

- 217. . . camped on the little creek [Rock Creek] bluff, where we drove our cattle down a long, steep hill to the creek bottom. (Crawford)
- 218. Road leaves the creek bluff. . . (McAllister)
- 219. Snake River, along here for miles, is walled in by high, perpendicular, basaltic bluffs, and in the parlance of the country, is said to run through a "canon." The river is thus some hundred feet below the general level of the country, which consists of barren rock partly covered with patches of sand. . . You may almost ride up to the brink of the chasm through which the river flows without being aware of its existence. (Talbot)
- 220. . . from the crossing of Rock Creek to forks of road 10 miles, the road runs nearby the [Rock] creek half the distance. . . From forks of road [to] where it joins the [Snake] river again 12 miles. (Belshaw)
- 221. From the forks of road to a high hill near the [Snake] river 2 miles; if your cattle are very dry, take the right hand fork to this hill and you can drive your stock down to the river, but the hill is steep and long. . . (Belshaw)
- 222. Snake River is about 300 yards to our right and we have concluded to try and water our cattle at this place. We were obliged to descend a very rough, rocky, and steep hill to reach the river, not knowing if we would be able to get our cattle back up the hill or not. Of course, we left our wagons on the hill. It requires from three-quarters to one hour's



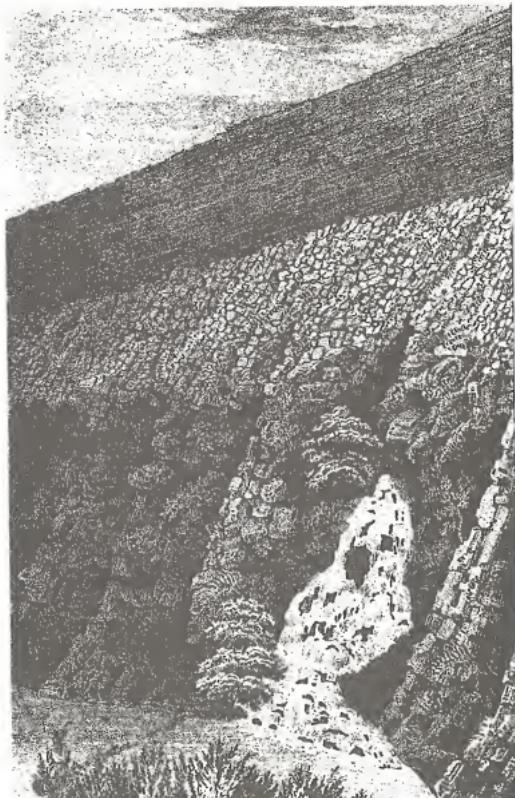
time to water our cattle and return to the place where we left our wagons. It is so steep and bad that many cattle are too weak to climb the hill, and therefore are left at the foot of the hill to perish among the big basalt boulders that cover the narrow bottoms of the Snake River. (Conyers)

Cross, knowing that many of the old fur trappers of the region were Frenchmen from Canada, notes, while here on the Crystal Springs overlook:

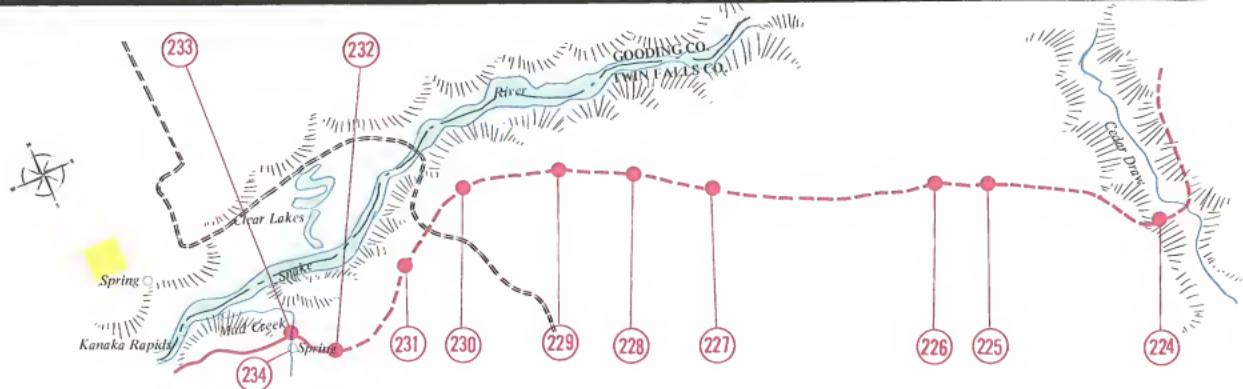
. . . came again to the banks of the [Snake] river which were at least two or three hundred feet in height. I attempted to descend into the valley through which the river ran for the purpose of procuring water, but it was so fatiguing, both for myself and the horses, that I returned without being able to accomplish it. . . We were much surprised to learn the next day that within ten miles of this place there is a cascade which in height is not surpassed by the Niagara falls [Shoshone Falls]. . . The road does not pass there and probably its nearest point is not less than 8 or 10 miles, which is probably the reason why it is so little known, for I have never seen it mentioned by those who have trapped this country for years. Their time is generally occupied and they take no interest in riding, much less walking, 20 miles out of their way to see a river tumble over rocks of any height. Besides, they are generally ignorant Canadians who have but very little curiosity to notice such things. (Cross)

*There were some very fine rapids above and below us. (Hines)*

223. Immediately opposite to us, a subterranean river burst directly from the face of the escarpment, and falls in white foam to the river below. . . We descended to the bottom, taking with us the boat, for the purpose of visiting the fall in the opposite cliffs. . . measuring the river which is 1,786 ft. in breadth, with banks 200 feet high. We were surprised, on our arrival at the opposite side, to find a basin of clear water, formed by the falling river, around which the rocks were whitened by some saline incrustation. . . The ascent of the steep hill was . . difficult. . . there were frequent hidden crevices among the rocks, where the water was heard rushing below; but we succeeded in reaching the main stream [Crystal Spring], which, issuing from strata of trap rock [basalt] in two principal branches, produced almost immediately a torrent, 22 feet wide, and white with foam. . . tumbling into the white basin below where the clear water contrasted beautifully with the muddy stream of the river. . . The temperature of the spring was 58°, while that of the river was 51°. The perpendicular height of the place at which this stream issues is 45 feet above the river, and 152 feet below the summit of the precipice. . . [Fremont]



What John C. Fremont called a subterranean river, coming from the north bank of the Snake River Canyon west from Twin Falls and east from Kanaka Rapids. Now called Crystal Spring.



From this overlook on Snake River, the road continues westward and finally descends to river level in Melon Valley:

- 224. Road turns south from the river [to head Cedar Draw], then west. (McAllister)
- 225. The road is on a high barren plain; a range of mountains is on our left, hard by, and at a great distance on our right another range appears. (Palmer)
- 226. In many places the gorge or ravine through which the Snake River and other streams flowing into it runs seems as though the mountain had opened and a broad space settled down through which these streams now run. There must have been terrible volcanic eruptions and earthquakes in these parts since the [biblical] flood. (Ketcham)
- 227. . . good road. (Belshaw)
- 228. A sage plain. . . Road. . . runs not far from the river. (McAllister)

229. Toward night came near the river again. . .(Ketcham)

230. . .descended a very long and steep hill to the Snake River. (Conyers)

It is here that the reader can decide which traveller's stock may not have been dry; and who took the left hand road farther back, not going to the steep descent to Snake River for water. For instance:

. . .15 miles [from Rock Creek] over a dry, dusty plain brought us to where the road led us down to the river. Here we could get water but no grass. (Crawford)

The travellers continue westward in Melon Valley:

- 231. . .rather sandy roads. (Belshaw)
- 232. The road now runs between the river and bluff and is very sandy. (McAllister)
- . . .a warm spring branch (Mud Creek) empties itself into the river at this place. (Palmer)

Palmer, from here offers traveling advice to those who may follow:

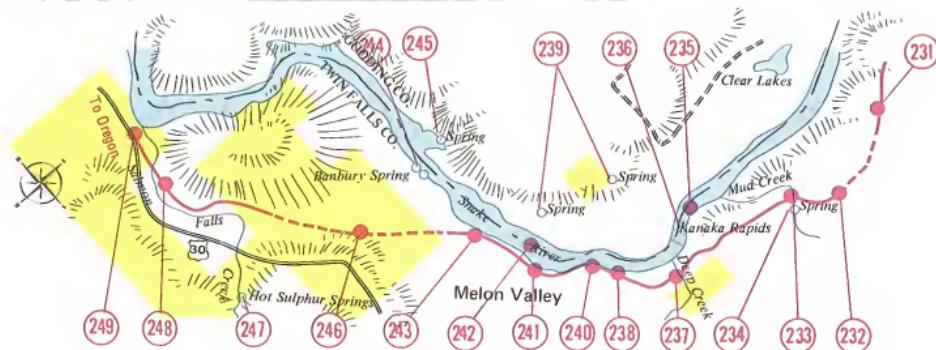
233. *Emigrants would pursue a more proper course by encamping on the bottom, near the source of Rock Creek, then drive down [Rock Creek] to where the road crosses in a kanyon, then following the road for 8 or 9 miles [along the west side of Rock Creek] to where the road leaves the bluff of the [Rock] creek and encamp, driving their cattle in to the creek bottom. From this place they can drive to Salmon Fall Creek, just four miles below our present encampment [at Mud Creek]. . . (Palmer)*

234. *There was a warm spring about half a mile up the ravine. (Hines)*

This warm spring is no longer evident as the channel is being used for drainage of the irrigation system in the area.

Looking east from Mud Creek toward the descent into Melon Valley.





The road now runs near Snake River, crossing low divides between tributaries, and makes its way to Salmon Falls Creek and out of southeastern Idaho:

235. *Camped . . . at the river's edge at the mouth of warm springs branch [Mud Creek]. (Robe)*

Kanaka Rapids is on the Snake River here:

236. *Here is a fall in the river about equal to that of the American Falls. (Adams)*

*. . . came to the foot of the Little Falls of the Snake River, commonly called Little Salmon Falls. . . The river here presented a beautiful view. Our encampment was on its banks and immediately at the foot of the falls, which could be seen from the bend above and until it again changed its direction below. The fall passes over several ledges of rock which extend across the river and somewhat parallel to each other, giving in its fall, when viewed at a distance, the appearance of heavy waves. (Cross)*



Kanaka Rapids.

237. . . we came to a small branch [Deep Creek], rather bad to cross. This is close to the [Snake] river. 3 miles farther is Salmon [Falls] Creek. (Goltra)

The banks [of Snake River] on both sides at this place [Deep Creek] become entirely changed. On the opposite side they take the form of small hills which gradually rise one above the other, bringing you again to a vast plain beyond them. The right bank presents broken bluffs, which form quite a valley between them and the river. Two small brooks pass out of the ravine, one at our encampment [Deep Creek] and the other three miles below, called Little Salmon Creek [Salmon Falls Creek]. . . (Cross)

238. Passed on half a mile over a bluff to the river again. (Adams)

239. Two large springs break out from the side of the mountain within one mile of each other, at least 100 feet above the river. . . and dash down with great velocity to the river. (Adams)

240. We are encamped immediately on the river bank. . . The river at this place is more open than for some distance above; and, for the time, the black precipices have disappeared, and no calcareous matter is visible in the soil. (Fremont)

While here, Fremont makes it clear that his "Fishing Falls" is Kanaka Rapids, and not Salmon Falls, as is commonly thought.

. . . our encampment was one mile below the "Fishing Falls," a series of cataracts with very inclined planes. . . (Fremont)

241. The road continues over a bed of rock which was very hard on the wagons. . . (Allyn)

242. . . drove the cattle to a small island 1½ miles up the river. . . (McAllister)

243. [Travelled] along the river bank. . . road bad. . . (Talbot)

244. On further we came across warm springs [Banbury hot springs] (not the boiling springs) oozing out of the top of the ground; a cold spring is nearby. (Wood)

245. On the opposite side of the river from us is a spring flowing out of the wall of the rock, large enough to turn a mill; it is a very beautiful stream [Banbury Springs, north side of Snake River]. . . (Wood)

246. Road. . . very sandy. (Conyers)

247. From here to Bannock Creek [Salmon Falls Creek] 3 miles. A hot spring to the left half way between these two creeks [Hot Sulphur Springs]. (Belshaw)

248. Road run around a very high mountain of clear lava and close to the bank of the creek. (Ketcham)

249. Arrived. . . at Salmon Fall Creek. This is a fine mountain stream. (Robe) Little Salmon Creek [Salmon Falls Creek] runs with much rapidity, falling over rocks and forming cascades on its way. (Cross)

## CALIFORNIA TRAIL

Before 1841 people went to California by vessel, via Cape Horn or to the Isthmus of Panama, crossing the Isthmus by wagon, and then going northward by vessel to California. They could also get to California by taking the overland trail to Oregon and then going southward along the coast to California.

In 1841 the first recorded effort by emigrants to go directly overland took place. The Bidwell-Bartleson party followed the Oregon Trail to Soda Springs, and instead of turning northward to Fort Hall, turned southward and followed Bear River to the Great Salt Lake. They had in mind then turning westward to the Humboldt River and then on to California. They made it, but only after having had to abandon the wagons.

One of the party, Joseph Chiles, returned to the states the next year and watched for a better way. He returned in 1843 with another party, but instead of turning at Soda Springs he continued beyond Fort Hall and then turned southward at Raft River. The party went up the river, passed through City of Rocks and continued westward over the Goose Creek Mountains to Goose Creek, and then southward out of Idaho. While this party also made it to California, they were not without troubles, but at least the Idaho portion of the trail was shown to be practicable.

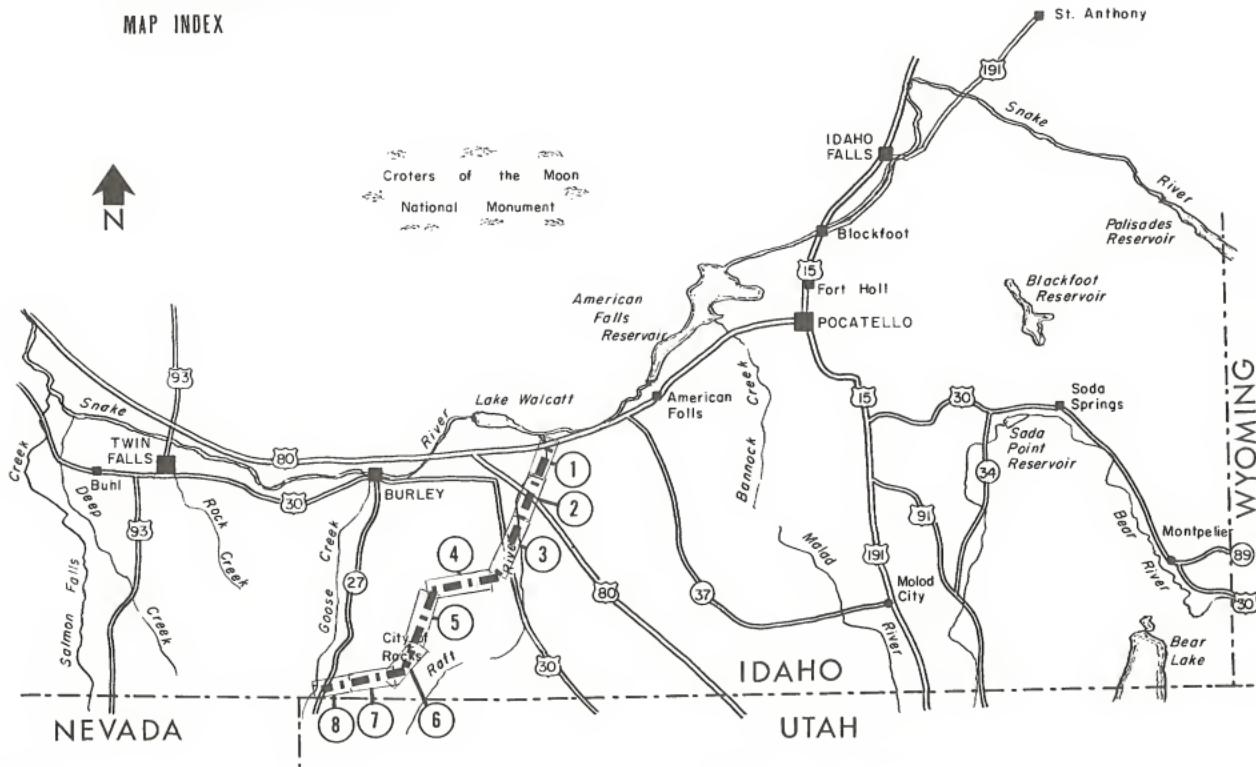
This then became the route for those wishing to go to California who did not want to visit Salt Lake City. The California Trail is the same as the Oregon Trail until it parts at the Raft River.

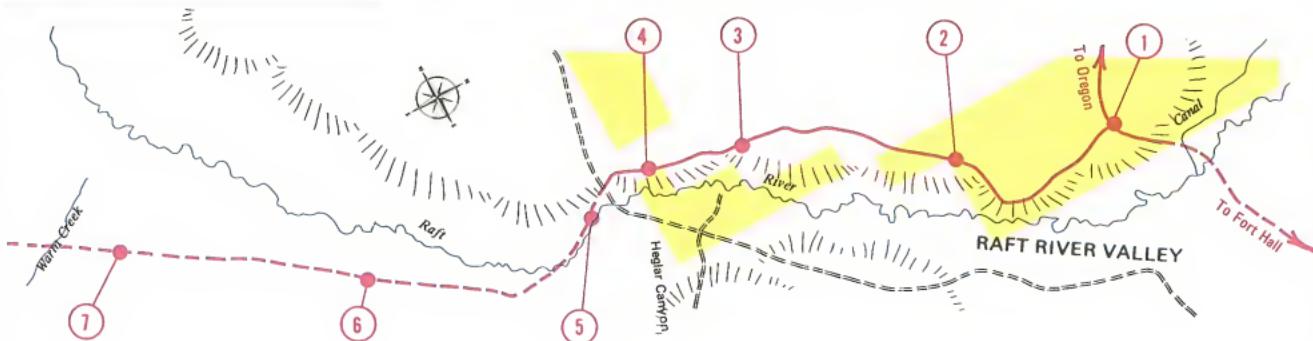
Stewart (1962) provides us with a splendid story of this part of the emigrant trails.

# Emigrant Trails of Southeastern Idaho

## CALIFORNIA TRAIL

### MAP INDEX

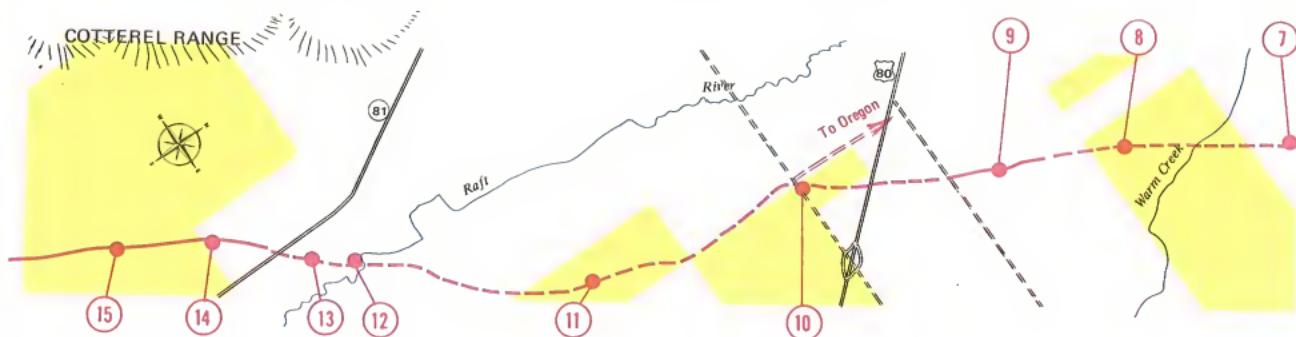




Once the decision to go to California was made, the travellers turned left at the fork, after having ascended the west bluff from Raft River and continued up the dry, dusty, sage-covered Raft River Valley.

1. *It is at the crossing of this stream [Raft River] that the Oregon and California roads separate. (Pritchard)*  
*We took the California road, intending to follow it about 300 miles... (Pringle)*
2. *The road ran up the creek. . . There appeared to be a road that ran toward Lewis [Snake] River that we supposed to be the Oregon Road. (Hale)*
3. *Country passed over this forenoon next {to the} river, all volcanic origin. On the left, sand and suppressed hills. . . (Bruff)*
4. *Road very rough and dusty. . . had to draw {drive!} 6 or 8 miles without water. (Caldwell)*
5. *. . . recrossed the stream. (Caldwell)*
6. *. . . and keeping up it two miles farther, left it. (Bryarly)*  
*The river now runs through deep alluvial banks. (Bruff)*
7. *We here struck across the plains, towards the mountains, through several miles of deep sand. . . (Bruff) . . . more nearly south, while the creek ran due west. (Bryarly)*





The travellers continue southward, still in the featureless Raft River Valley.

8. Our course now lay southerly, up the creek. . . (Delano)
9. Travelled over a level ridge to save a bend in the creek. . . (Pringle)

A very few persons en route to Oregon went by way of Salt Lake City. These persons merged with the Raft River road many miles south from here, travelled northward along the trail and then turned northwest toward Marsh Creek from here.

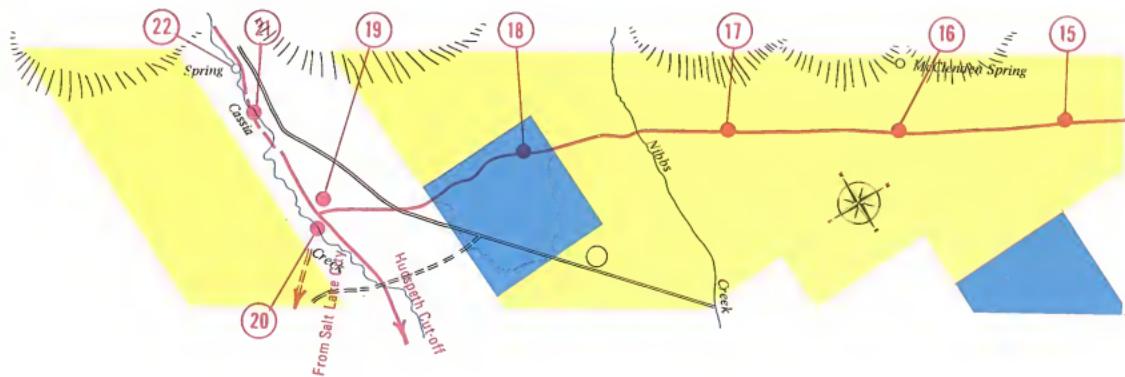
10. Six miles. . . brought us again to the same Cachia Creek [Raft River], running now due south . . . Here goes off the last road to Oregon, taking directly over the bluffs. (Bryarly)

11. Moved up stream, bearing a little w[est] of s[south]. (Caldwell)
12. . . during the day we crossed it three times. . . The valley of Raft Creek was like all others in the county, a level, barren plain, except in the immediate bottoms. On either hand were high hills, rising abruptly from the sides, with black trap-rocks [basalt] protruding from the surface. . . (Delano)

This third crossing of Raft River is hardly recognizable today; channelization has moved the course and irrigation has removed most of the water from Raft River.

13. The road then struck off to the south-west, having been running south for some time. (Bryarly)
14. The road [is] a good one, on a s[south] course, in about 2 hour's ride, brought us to a slight table land, —the outlayer of the mountains. (Bruff)
15. The river here is a mere brook, and trends round to the s[south]. . . the road runs across the plateau, and small hills. . . (Bruff)





Leaving Raft River, the road ascends the bench of the valley and makes for what is now Cassia Creek, near where it emerges from the mountains.

16. . . . 4 miles and found a splendid spring that burst out from the base of the mts. [McLendon Spring] . . . which sunk in about 400 yards. . . . It was one mile to the right of the road and had not been discovered by any previous emigrants. This was truly an oasis in the desert. (Pritchard)
17. The road today has been tolerable. . . (Hale)
18. The road was filled with round black stone for 4 or 5 miles, which made it bad travelling. Our course was towards the base of the mountains. (Pritchard)

Pritchard's train struck Cassia Creek before July 25, 1849, when Hudspeth's Cutoff was closed at Cassia Creek here:

19. In 4 miles we struck the north branch of Raft River [Cassia Creek]. (Pritchard)

Delano arrived before that date also, but his diary, in retrospect, says:

. . . soon left the valley of the Raft [river] at the point where I have since been told the new road from the Soda Springs, found by [J.J.] Myers, comes in [Hudspeth's Cutoff]. (Delano)

Caldwell, on the other hand, arrived at Cassia Creek shortly after the Cutoff was closed. The Cutoff travellers were not entirely truthful to him:

. . . reached the junction of the [Hudspeth] cut-off road and the California route we were on. Here the emigrants were pouring through at a rapid rate. They say the route is good, and the distance estimated at 120 miles from the Soda Springs to the junction of the two routes on Raft River. . . . Road not mountainous —so say they who travelled that way. (Caldwell)

It was near here, where the California road turns westward at Cassia Creek and is joined by Hudspeth's Cutoff, that the road leading from Salt Lake City to Oregon joined the California road. So few took it that few other travellers noticed it; however:

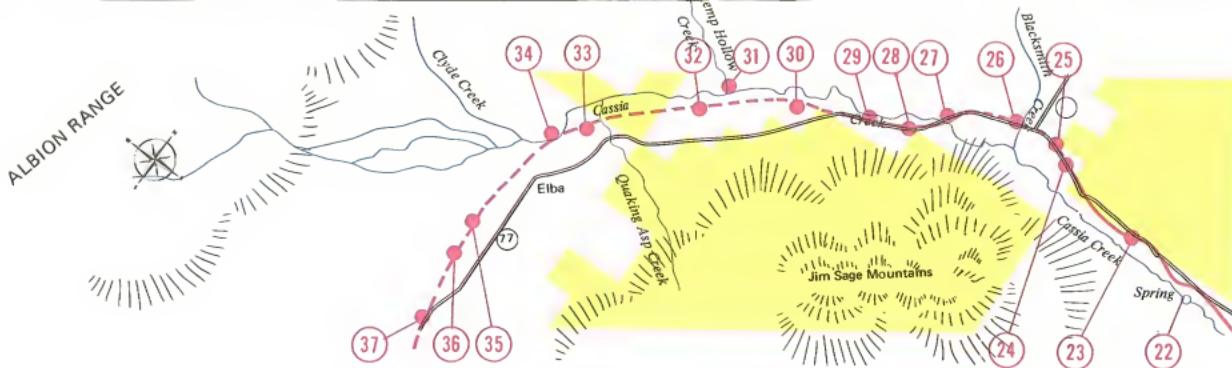
20. *Just where the stream [Cassia Creek] issues from the mountains, the Fort Hall road unites with the [Hudspeth] cutoff and the Salt Lake and Oregon. . . (Swain)*

*Five miles brought us to the west branch of the Raft River [Cassia Creek], and the junction of the Salt Lake and Fort Hall roads, which is 180 miles long. (Hayden)*

*We went a few miles further and camped on Raft River [Cassia Creek] near where the Salt Lake and Fort Hall roads come together. (Granville County Company)*

The future Californians turned west here:

21. *Here the road keeps up this branch, in a westerly direction. (Bryarly)  
. . .up a gentle ascent. (Caldwell)*



Much is known of the California road westward from the junction because there are more diaries due to the increased traffic:

22. *1½ miles west. . .is a bog on the left and a small warm spring rises from a truncated conical heap within two yards of the road. . .In many places, a substance similar to slaked lime has the exact appearance of snow so that most are deceived by it. On the peaks south there appears to be several precipices or walls of basalt (columnar). (Lord)*
23. *The route. . .is a few rods north of the main stream which skirts the base of the southern range. It runs along the slope of the northern range just above the creek bottom which is sometimes only a few rods wide and then a quarter of a mile. . .Springs abound everywhere. (Lord)*



Cassia Gap on the horizon—  
the California Trail is on the flat to the left of the road.

24. *Good grass all along the creek, which is here confined to a much narrower space between the hills than [it is] below. (Snyder)*
25. *The road still continues as dusty as before and runs down between two ranges of mountains, the valley being not more than 100 yards wide. (Bryarly)*
26. *The valley of the little stream is narrow. . .the bluffs are very high, having the appearance of being iron ore and ledges. Where they can be seen [they] are dipping in every declension having the appearance of having been thrown up together in great confusion by some mighty convulsion of nature. . .a small stream or creek from the [north] bluffs [Blacksmith Creek]. (Swain)*



View south from Blacksmith Creek, California road turns south up Cassia Creek. The California road enters the picture in the trees at the base of the mountain on the left, then rounds the brow of the ridge in the left center and goes between the two mountains.

27. We followed up the east [north] side of the branch eight miles and re-crossed nearly opposite two high mountain peaks closely resembling each other. . . .the road was rough and stony. (Sawyer)

28. Immediately after crossing, we crossed a swamp. . . (Bryarly)

29. River here [is a] mere run, trending around to the south]. (Bruff)

30. . . .we turned up the valley, which, though two miles or more in width, seems only a defile, so far do the mountains on either side tower into the sky. On our left the mountain rises smooth and verdureless, its summit crowned with a perpendicular wall of black cliffs [basalt], which terminate, where the range falls off in the forks of the river, by a fortress-like rock. (Steele)

31. The ascent has been gradual today, scarcely perceptible. . . a small stream comes in [Kemp Hollow Creek] . . . (Lord)

32. . . .the road takes a course along the base of the hills, gradually ascending over a barren [plain] to a branch of the same creek as last. (Athearn)

33. . . .wet roads and swamps. . . (Bruff)

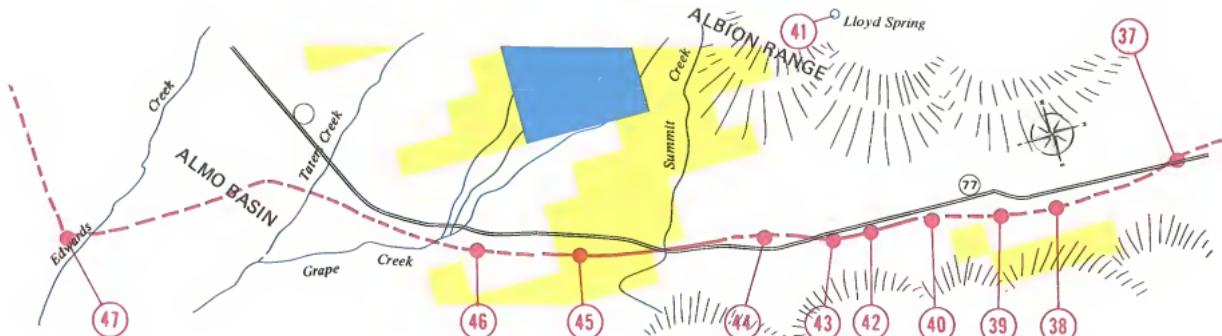
34. . . .the road leaves the stream to the right in the mountains. The creek here divides into three and forms a fine bottom. . . (Parke)

35. The road. . . is south, passing some springs. . . (Lord)

36. After travelling three miles in the valley, we took nearly a southern direction leaving the stream on which we was camped. . . Raft River [Cassia Creek] which headed in the mountains at our right. (Lewis)

. . .we passed some ledges of white marble of superior quality [factually it is white quartzite]. The particles of marble [quartzite] lay over the [illegible] flat and the sides of the bluffs are white with it and appear like mountains of marble. (Swain)





After passing what is now Elba, the travellers continued southward up the gentle ascent to the Raft River – Cassia Creek divide between Elba and Almo:

38. . .then three miles SSW crossing the dry beds of a streamlet which comes down from the south, and then [the road] ascends more rapidly to a much higher level. (Lord)
39. Course S[outh] W[est] by S[outh] about 3 miles then S[outh] – a couple of miles, and S[outh] W[est] by W[est] till we, in a short distance struck the stream again, and were compelled, by the branches and marshes, to cross it several times. . . Volcanic rock – particularly striking on left. The apparent walls of a crater, and other craggy perpendicular ranges of black rock [basalt] all over them. (Bruff)
40. Two miles from this point, W[est] S[outh] W[est], are several rounded mountain peaks with a clump of willows and a spring at the base [Lloyd Springs], and SW there is an isolated one looking like a pyramid [Thunder Mountain]. The plain between is smooth and beautiful. On the left a short distance is the dry bed of the stream, running parallel with the road, bounded on the east, without an intervening bottom, by some low, irregular brown gravel bluffs, partially covered with dwarfed cedar and cut through with deep ravines, which continue 3 or 4 miles back at the base of the range of mountains extending north and south, and presenting a jagged and unequal broken ridge. Its crest, indeed, looks more like a saw with broken teeth than any other thing. (Lord)

Cedar covered slopes north of Elba. Trail at base of the slope in center of picture.



41. Near the summit of the hill you will find several springs to the right of the road [Lloyd Springs] . . . (Steele, 1854)
42. The route is next nearly south 1½ miles. . . (Lord)

43. *The head of the stream trends S to the SSW. . . An entire range on our left, of volcanic hills, for about 15 miles; and on our right similar formations for about 10 miles]. . . (Bruff)*

Upon reaching the divide, the travellers could look southward and see the Salt Lake Cutoff coming from the east:



Cache Peak from Elba-Almo divide. Picture taken from trail looking westward.

44. *On reaching the top of the ridge, which we did after proceeding about a mile, we saw a large basin, surrounded by high mountains, the road apparently running around at their base to avoid, as we thought, marshy ground in the valley, and from which a pretty creek took its rise. From the place where we stood we could see a line of dust all around the basin, with wagons moving on the opposite side [of the Salt Lake Cutoff]. It seemed as if the road led out between a gap in the mountains to the south-east [Narrows of Raft River] in the direction which the creek ran, [Grape Creek] for we could trace its course by the willows. (Delano)*

Almo Basin from California Road looking south from the divide. Here the dust of travellers from Salt Lake City could be seen in the distance.

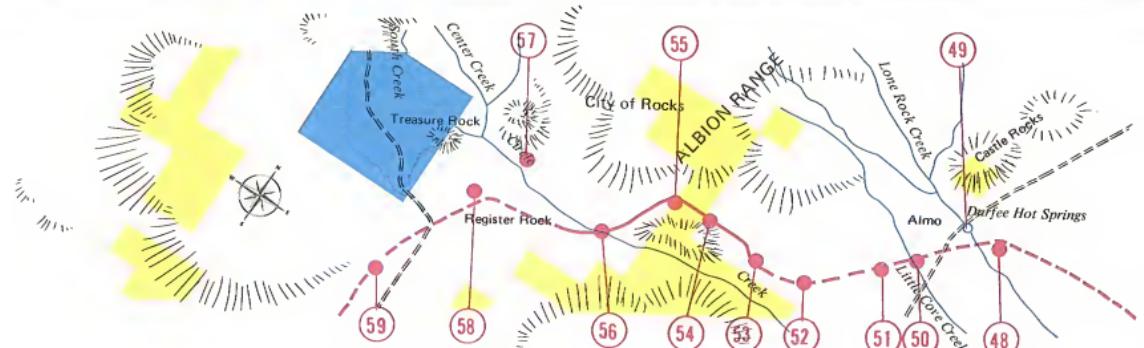


45. . . travelled directly across the valley before us, amidst the best scenery we have seen since we have been away. The hills south [are] high ranges of mountains. . . east, a range of high bluffs with a level plain at the foot, and west, the marble buildings [quartzite], and in the background, high, broken and craggy, detached mountains specked with the pure white marble cropping out in ledges. Our road lies among the marble hills which were capped with deep, thick, ledges of pure white marble. . . (Swain)

46. Two miles, we crossed a run of water, which I suppose is Ware's "Rattlesnake" River [Grape Creek]. (Bryarly)

Ware had published a guidebook of the road to California which some of the travellers used.

47. . . encamped tonight on the center stream [Edwards Creek]. (Pritchard) The road here runs south. Across the other side of the valley which we passed, we distinctly saw the dust arising as from a road. . . it was the road from Salt Lake. . . crossed a very marshy place which extends as far as the eye can reach, and which I judge is [Ware's] "Swamp Creek" [Edwards Creek]. (Bryarly)



The travellers now turn southwestward from the Almo area and enter the "City of Rocks":

48. . .the road angles slightly to the right and crosses two little branches. . .gradually descend east of south one mile, when the road turns S[outh] S[outh] W[est] leaving the little stream to the left. . .Nearly due west from this last angle are some singularly appearing rocks [Castle Rocks] and in a valley beyond, some high, isolated hills. (Lord)



We camped near some singular turret shaped rocks in a small circular valley of the mountains to the right [Castle Rocks]. Opposite our camp is a broad valley extending to the eastward. The Salt Lake road comes up this valley. (Sawyer)

49. . .reached some warm springs on the right of the road [Durfee's hot springs, Almo]. They were warm enough to cook an egg in three minutes. (Parke)

50. Small creek 1½ rods wide, ¼ mile [Little Cove Creek]. (Athearn)  
 51. Camped. . .with a wide plain at our left and high mountains at our right and being within sight of the emigration which went the Fort Bridger and Salt Lake Route which road intersects our trail seven miles farther on. (Lewis)  
 52. . .two miles from camp we entered a narrow valley, hemmed in by very high, rocky and precipitous mountains. (Sawyer)  
 53. This gorge in the mountains is dangerous to pass on account of the piles of large round stone that lay in the road, over which we are compelled to pass. (Pritchard)  
 54. A very pretty little mountain stream ran along this kanyon pass. (Bryarly)  
 55. . .a ravine bounded with the most splendid "rock" scenery I ever held. E[ast] and S[outh] high mountains capped with white marble [quartzite] based upon granate [granite] and this upon felsparic granitic [feldspathic granite]. (Swain)  
 56. . .now commence rising the mountains again (not very steep) through a pass leading to the left over a small ridge to a mountain stream [Circle Creek]. A good ford, all gravel. (Turnbull)  
 57. . .when we entered a very extraordinary valley, called the "City of Castles" [City of Rocks]. (Bruff)

The City of Rocks was and is a well-known trail landmark and almost all of the diarists stop to describe it; some are exceedingly descriptive:

*. . . Pyramid Valley, displaying to the traveller scenery of the most wild and majestic character. Three miles within the gorge, an immense granite boulder resembling in the distance some old dilapidated castle and on which hundreds of names are inscribed, rises up a full hundred feet in height, in the shade of which we halted. . . A clear mountain rivulet [Circle Creek] was coursing its way down a ravine a few yards distant. (Bennett)*

*A couple of miles long, and probably  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile broad. A light gray decrepitating granite, (probably altered by fire) in blocks of every size, from that of a barrel to the dimensions of a large dwelling-house; groups, masses on masses, and cliffs; and worn, by the action of ages of elementary affluences, into strange and romantic forms. The travellers had marked several large blocks, as their fancy dictated the resemblance to houses, castles, etc. On one was marked (with tar) "NAPOLEON'S CASTLE," another "CITY HOTEL," etc. . . sketched some of these queer rocks. (Bruff)*

The first view of the City of Rocks from entrance, looking west.



Sarcophagus Rock, Aug. 29th - 1849



{ about 15 feet long, 8 ft broad,  
4 ft high; bunch 3 ft broad, 2 ft high,  
and 12 long.

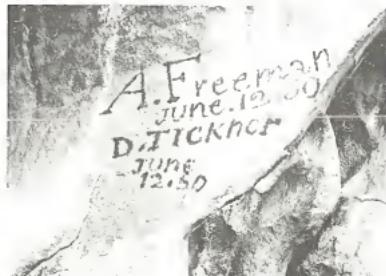


Sketch by J.G. Bruff in 1849 of travellers in what he called Sarcophagus Rock in the City of Rocks. The lower portion attaches to the right of the upper portion at the "X". Courtesy of Columbia University Press.

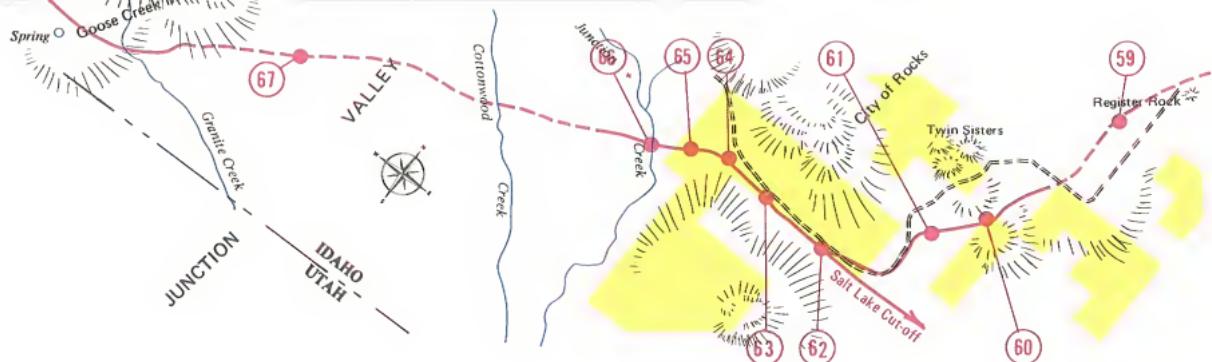


58. This valley is remarkably interesting. The formation and general appearance [are] the same as in the Valley of Rocks, and the range is far more extensive, but does not possess the extreme beauty of the first. From the form of one on the right of the road a few rods, and its remarkable similarity to a thatched cottage even to the very eaves and chimney, and being surrounded by other large cottage and tent-like rocks, I have ventured to name the Cottage City, [Treasure Rock] though I found "Castle City Hotel" painted in large letters on the front for a sign. I do not think the last name appropriate and I shall retain my own. The cottage or "hotel" covers a quarter of an acre and has a chimney top 5½ feet in diameter and 6 feet high. These singular rocks extend more than a mile north and south, and the whole looks like a village with 2 or 3 long streets. I ascended the "hotel" and climbed up and sat upon the chimney. This perch where I now sit to write is 80 feet high though from a short distance it appears no more than 25 or 30. It is very difficult to attain. A regular breakneck performance. South East is a rock which presents the transverse section of an aqueduct. (Lord)

59. From the cottage [Treasure Rock] the road is S[outh] and S[outh] S[outh] W[est] 2½ miles, crossing a shallow valley and gradually ascending to a considerable elevation. . . (Lord)







As fascinating as it was to the Californians, few stayed long at the City of Rocks. They continued southwest toward the Goose Creek Mountains:

60. . . .the outlet of this romantic vale, a very narrow pass, just wide enough for a wagon, and on either side very high, jagged, and thin walls of granite. . . This is called the "Pinnacle Pass," and the tall rock on the right – the "Spire Rock." [Bruff]

. . . no little difficulty for a time in determining which was Steeple Rock. [Twin Sisters] The last two rocks, however, as we passed out of the valley, seemed pre-eminently entitled to the appellation. They rise in a cone-like form from the bottom of the valley to a height of from 400 to 600 feet; they are round and quite regular in form, tapering gradually to a point. (Sawyer)

Twin Sisters. Bruff's Spire Rock is now called Twin Sisters by modern travellers but most of the emigrants called it Steeple Rock.



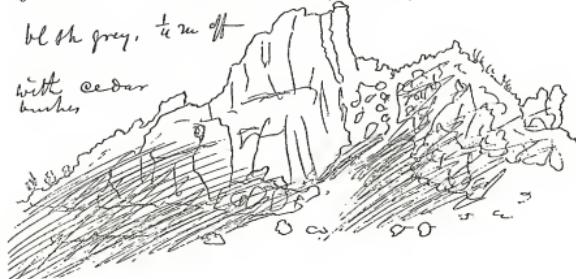
Near French Grove on right, "Mt. Cheesewich,  
granite abutments) - in bottom and a parallel  
ridge



Pinnacle - Pds - outlet of Valley, 29th Aug

bl & grey, turn off

with cedar bushes



Sketch by J.G. Bruff of the exit from the City of Rocks from the north, called by him Pinnacle Pass. The lower portion fits to the right of the upper portion at the "X".

61. The road here descends a narrow and rather rocky way for a few rods and then the descent is easy though winding and crooked one mile and *South* [South] West, then the road turns west... (Lord)

The narrow passage at "Pinnacle Pass." (looking NE up the grade) Note the grave in the granite at the right. This was caused by wear from chains which were used to let heavily laden wagons down the steep desert. The tree in the background was used to support the block and tackle. None of the emigrants mentioned any particular trouble descending this grade.



62. . .the [road] from Salt Lake, a new route, comes in from the east up a ravine. This route is worse than ours and 50 miles longer. It passes up the east side of Salt Lake, crosses Bear River and runs along the north side [of the Great Salt Lake] through a barren desolate region and enters the old Fort Hall trail here. (Lord)

All the California-bound travellers are now on one road, heading westward:

63. . .crossed another ridge (Lewis)  
64. We now descend gradually into another broad basin-like valley [Junction Valley] . . . (Sawyer)

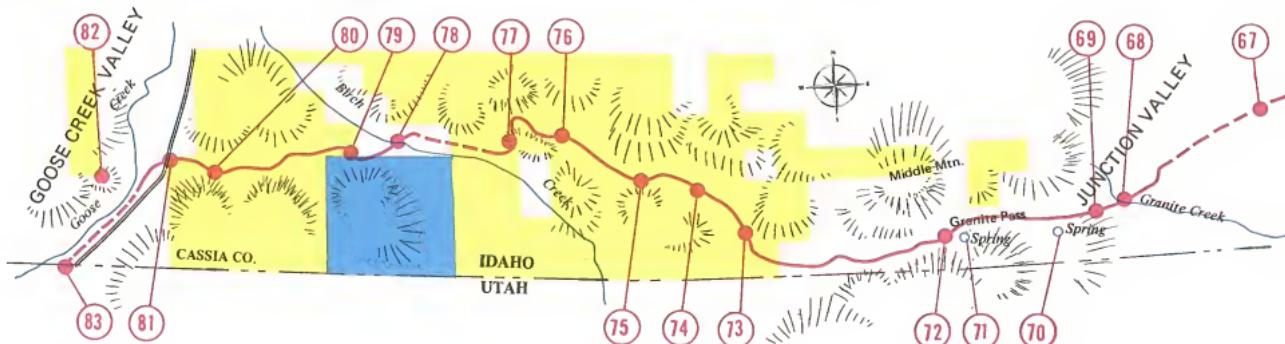
We found some very beautiful specimens of white stone [quartzite] resembling white marble as we entered the rocky valley. . . Some pronounced it marble, but I think it is too hard a stone for marble, though it is no doubt susceptible of a remarkably fine and beautiful polish (Sawyer)

65. The main valley runs nearly S[outh]E[ast] and N[orth]W[est], and has an abundance of springs on the west and south. (Lord)  
66. . .arrived at a creek with steep banks [Junction Creek] . . . (Abbey)  
67. . .crossing some small streams which I think cannot be permanent. (Sawyer)



Granite Pass in background;  
picture taken from east side of  
Junction Valley looking south-  
west.





After leaving Junction Valley, the travellers made their way over the Goose Creek Mountains, via Granite Pass, and then descended to Goose Creek and out of south-eastern Idaho:

68. . . we camped at a fine little stream on the sides of the hill, 8 miles from Goose Creek. (Granville County Company)
69. . . commenced the ascent of another mountain. The road lay along a small creek which heads in the mountain. (C. Taylor)
70. At the entrance of the pass was a pleasant little spring and fine branch. (Bryarly)
71. In the middle was another [spring], equally fine. (Bryarly)
72. We now ascended, for the distance of four miles, and found ourselves on the summit of a ridge of mountains. A prospect bounded only by the power of vision, now burst upon the sight. A broad valley stretching north and south lay at our feet and perhaps two thousand feet below us. A long stream, called Goose Creek, winds its way through the valley, which is studded over with a countless number of hills of beautiful and fantastic forms. To the west of this interminable vale is a vast amphitheater, of mountains, rising in successive chains behind each other, the most distant overlooking the whole, and appearing like the faint glimpse of a cloud, with pointed summits stretching along the horizon. Taken all in all, it was one of the most sublime pieces of mountain scenery I have as yet surveyed in this region of wonders. (Langworthy)

Birch Creek Valley from Granite Pass.

. . . an extensive view of the hills before us which promises a very rough road. The country ahead is far lower than we are, and appears to decline. . . (Swain)



73. We now descended a long and tedious mountain to Goose River. (Sawyer)

. . . we found a rough country, with steep and sideling passes, while at every step, as we advanced, indications of high volcanic action became more apparent. Cones and colored hills, rocks which appeared as if they had been rent in twain, deep gullies in every rocky and rugged shape, were present to our view. Yet the road lay over the most eligible ground. . . (Delano)

74. The road. . . was very crooked, steep, and rough. (C. Taylor)

75. We now went over hills, the roughest road—was not a bad one and would not have been practicable to any but a California emigrant. The trail on the hill sides was so sideling that we had to hold up the wagons to keep them from turning over. Again it [the road] went over the high clifftop tops. (Farnham)

76. In one place, we descended a hill for about a mile, composed wholly of a substance resembling burnt lime [volcanic ash], or magnesia. It is as light as corkwood, and being in the road, pulverized to a perfect fineness by the travel. The wheels sink in it to a depth of nearly two feet, raising an immense cloud of white dust. (Langworthy)



Deep ruts, Goose Creek descent.

77. . . . the descents were frightful to look at. We rough locked them and pulled back on them [wagons] with our ropes. To look up at wagons coming down, it did not seem as if they could be held back to come down steady, but yet they were. To look up at the wagons toward the top, they looked as if they were on end. (Farnham)

Rope burns on tree below the pencil.



78. We camped on a brook a mile and a half short of Goose Creek [Birch Creek]. (Lord)

79. . . .ascended a hill and drove on to the wild, strange valley of Goose Creek. From the summit of the hill, a fine and peculiarly interesting view was afforded. (Delano)

80. We emerged from this pass into a pretty valley, which is "Goose Creek Valley," with Goose Creek running through it. . . The valley is */af* half mile wide. (Bryarly)

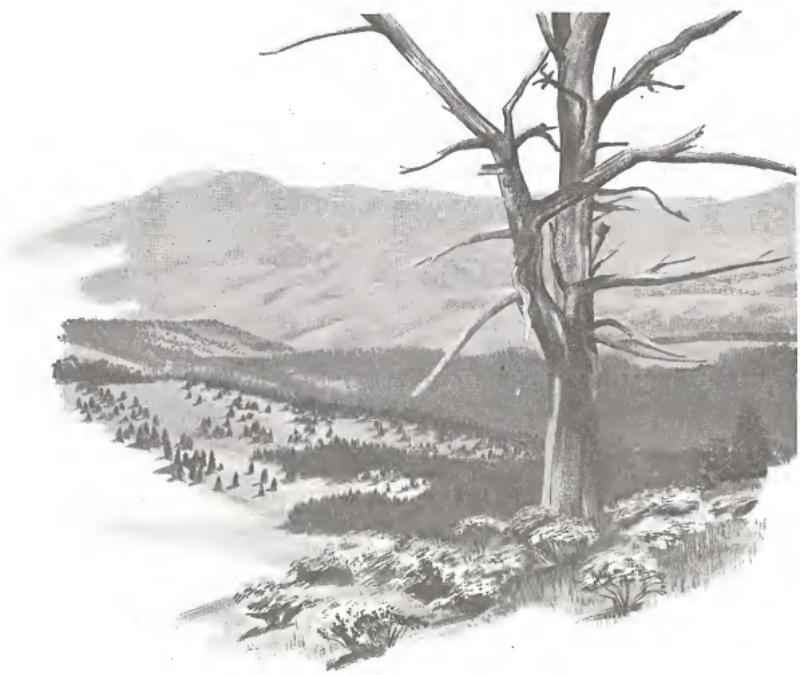
81. We reached the river, a stream three or four rods wide. . . Some of the ledges along Goose River are chalk *[fash]*, though not quite so pure. (Sawyer)

83. . . .drove down to the creek near 2 miles, then up the creek 2½ miles *S[outh] S[outh] W[est]*. (Lord)



82.

. . .on reaching the valley of the creek, B.R. Thorne and myself, tired as we were, climbed to the top of a high table mountain which stood on the right of the road, and found the surface flat, and covered with melted debris, such as I have seen among the cinders of a blast furnace. (Delano)



## SALT LAKE CUTOFF

In 1848, there were but two ways to get to California overland without going southwestward into the desert country. One way was by the usual, well-established route via the California Trail through Soda Springs, Fort Hall and Raft River. The other was to go by way of the youthful Salt Lake City. Few took this route. One would turn southwestward from Fort Bridger, way back in Wyoming, and continue to Salt Lake City, then continue northwestward across the north shore of the Great Salt Lake and then on to Goose Creek to get to the Humboldt River. The reverse of these two routes lay before some of the members of the Mormon Battalion. They had been in California, having gone there by the southwestern route, done their duty, and now were on the way eastward to rejoin their families at the "City of the Saints." They were travelling eastward on the California Trail in Nevada, ascending the Humboldt River, when they were met by Samuel J. Hensley. Hensley was travelling westward, after having been in Salt Lake City.

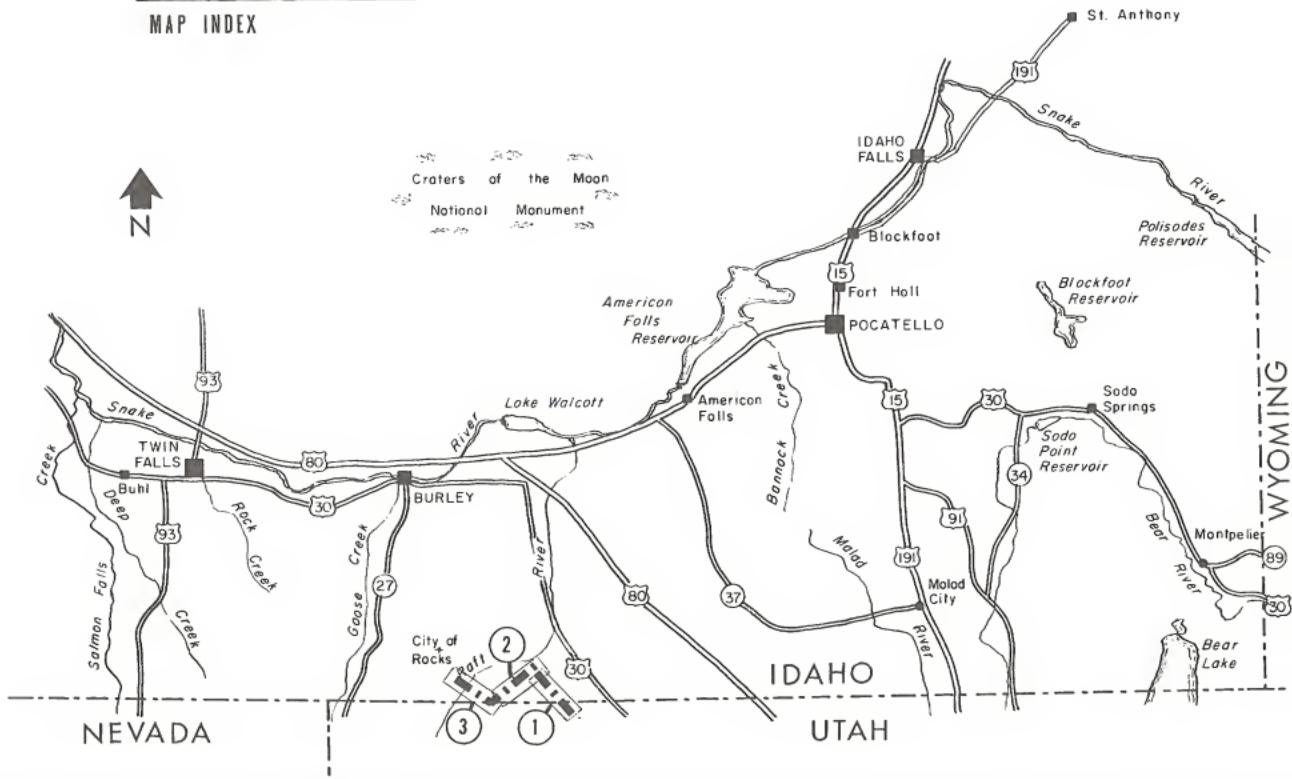
He told them of a route around the north end of the Great Salt Lake which joined the California Trail near the City of Rocks, which, if taken eastward, would enable them to save considerable miles by not having to go by way of Fort Hall. They took his advice, and after arriving at what is now the Twin Sisters, continued eastward down Emigration Canyon, across the Upper Raft River Valley, through the Narrows, and then southeastward toward the northern edge of the Raft River Mountains.

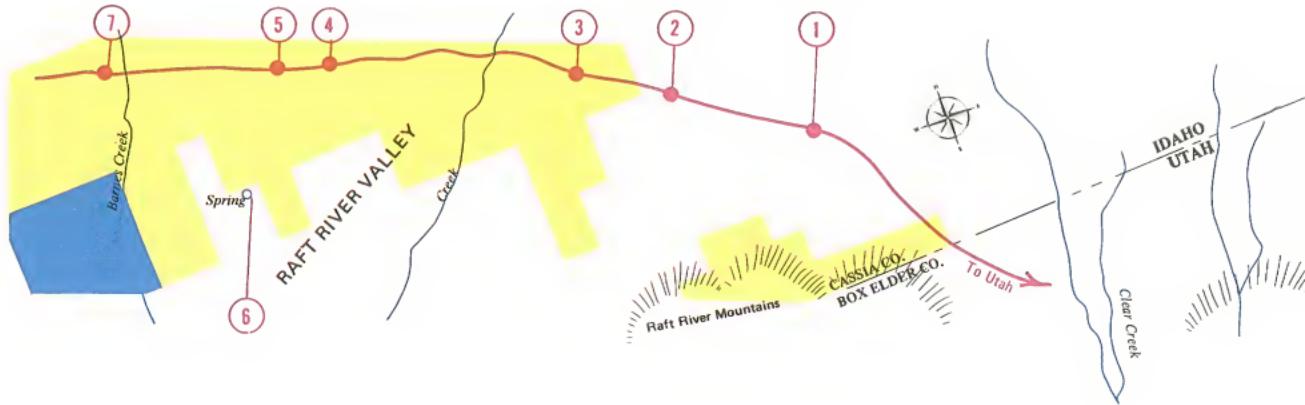
The reverse of this route was then adopted by many west-bound travellers who did wish to visit Salt Lake and still not have the terrible southwest desert to cross. Korns (1951) provides a very detailed account of this discovery.

# Emigrant Trails of Southeastern Idaho

## SALT LAKE CUTOFF

### MAP INDEX





The travellers, after leaving Salt Lake City and crossing the desert along the north shore of the Great Salt Lake, came upon the north slope of the Raft River Mountains. They continued northwest, crossed Clear Creek, turned more to the north and entered Idaho, making straight for the Raft River Narrows.

1. *This is a rough, barren country, very mountainous, ill-shaped, and desolate. (J. Clark)*
2. *Our road lay for several miles along the bench of the mountains. . . (C. Taylor)*
3. *We travelled 11 miles further over a barren level plain. (deWolf)*

Raft River Narrows on horizon.



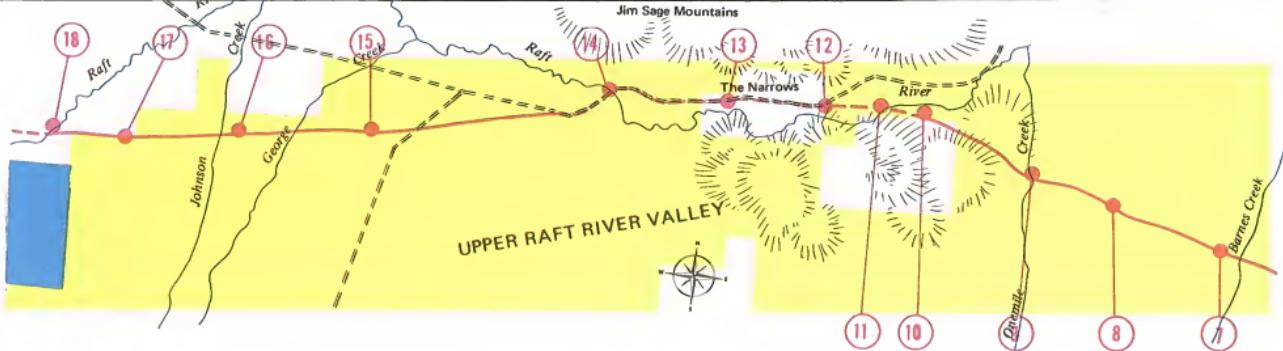
4. . . .we rolled out [from the camp at Clear Creek], getting farther from the mountains on the left [Raft River Range] as we advanced. Roads level with the exception of the crossings of the dry beds of some little creeks; also dusty. (Yager)
5. . . descended an inclined plain 8 miles and camped near the sink of a small stream. (Langworthy)
6. . . .came to a good spring. (Staples)

It may have been good for Staples, but it runs now only in certain seasons.

7. . . .our road was some hilly. . . (Staples)

Raft River Mountains from  
Clear Creek crossing.





Here the emigrants, hurrying westward, passed through the Raft River Narrows and turned due west toward the California Trail.

8. *The country through which we are now travelling is very broken and mountainous, some of the highest peaks having snow on them. Whilst in the valley the weather is hot and sultry. (C. Taylor)*
9. *We next crossed Shonese Creek [One-mile Creek?] 6 feet wide, eight inches deep. . . (deWolf)*
10. *. . . nine miles brought us to. . . a narrow pass in the mountains. Here we were brought up at the brow of a steep road on the spurs of the mountain, presenting a most dismal prospect for the passage of a wagon [the Narrows of Raft River]. . . putting ropes across each side of the bed, all hands got on the upper side of the mountain and held on like good fellows to prevent the wagon from upsetting in the creek, and in half an hour all had scaled the walls of the precipice without an accident (Abbey)*

The "Narrows" of Raft River (at the base of the hill in center of picture) from the Northeast. The travellers had difficulty here.



11. In the afternoon we crossed Cassius Creek [Raft River], a fine clear stream with pebbly bottom, up which we travelled several miles. . .  
(C. Taylor)

In emigrant days, the geography of this part of the country was not well known and Raft River, as we now know it, was called everything but that. For instance: Cassius Creek, Cayina Creek, Decasure Creek, DeCaron Creek, Decatur Creek, Casas Creek, Delaware Creek and Clojux Creek.

12. The most notable feature here is. . .the piles of small brown rock [quartz latite, a type of lava], that is on the mountain sides on each side of DeCaron Creek [Raft River], resembling prepared piles of rock to put on a turnpike. We are in the mouth of a canyon, that the creek runs through. (Yager)

13. Followed the stream. . .through a lengthy defile, among detached conical mountains. (Langworthy)

14. . .crossed the creek and ascending one and a half miles, we recrossed, and found ourselves at the upper end of the canyon, and on the border of an opening about 8 miles wide each way [upper Raft River valley], surrounded by mountains. (Yager)

15. . .we left the creek to the right, it bending around at the foot of the right hand mountains [Jim Sage Range]. Our road ran nearly through the center of the opening. (Yager)

16. The streams of water in this neighborhood have but a brief existence; they rise in some mountain summit, flow down into the valley, run a short distance over the desert sand and sink from sight. (J. Clark)

17. After this, we emerged into an extensive plain, . . .there is a snowy mountain about 12 miles to the north [Cache Peak]. (Langworthy)

From this point on the plain, travellers on the Salt Lake Cutoff who looked north may have seen:

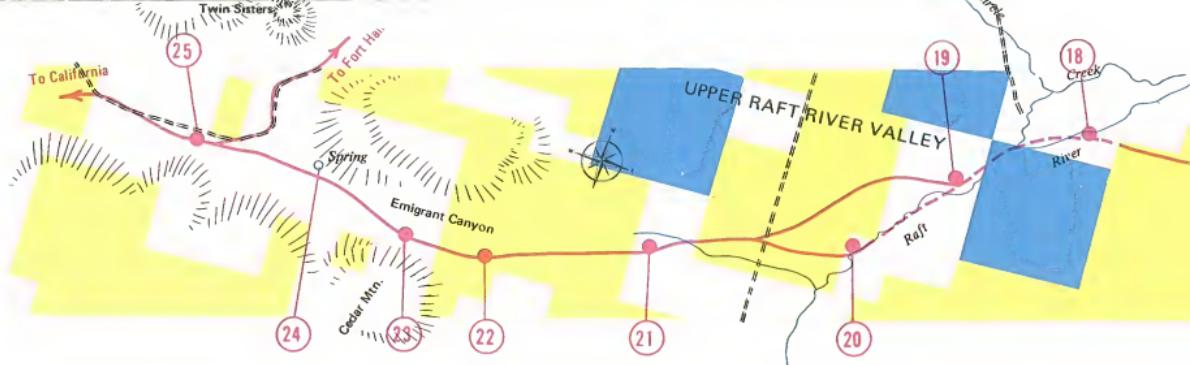
18. Went 27 miles, camped on Delaware Creek [Raft River]. We are now in sight of Sublette's Cut-off road [actually the road from Fort Hall entering the City of Rocks from the east]. Mountains on both sides covered with snow. (Couper)

Whereas those who looked west noted:

There is a range of mountains directly in front of us [Cedar Hills], through some gorge of which, I suppose, our road will lead us [Emigrant Canyon]. (Langworthy)

Emigrant Canyon from east, through which the Salt Lake Cutoff passes.





From Raft River, the trail goes westward through Emigrant Canyon in Cedar Mountain, to join the California trail south of the City of Rocks:

19. *We passed up the creek. . ./Raft River] to where the road leaves it, and camped. (Staples)*
20. *. . . we turned to the right up a shallow gulch, leaving the creek entirely. (Yager)*
21. *. . . ascended an inclined plane for several miles. . . (Langworthy)*
22. *Two and a quarter miles more of rocky road brought us to the mouth of a canyon [Emigrant Canyon]. (Yager)*
23. *The road today was very mountainous and rocky, making it tedious traveling. (McKeeby)*

Track leading into Emigrant Canyon on the Salt Lake Cut-off, from the east.



24. A spring of water, but not very good, is about 200 yards below camp. . .  
(Yager)



*In sight of, and near our road, are two tall and sharp pointed columns [steeples rocks now called Twin Sisters], 2 or 3 hundred feet in apparent height, their forms being regular and beautifully elongated cones. These are monuments erected by the hand of nature, rivalling in grandeur Trajan's Pillar or Cleopatra's Needle. Farther back on the Fort Hall road, I am told is a succession of these steeples, filling a narrow valley for 2 or 3 miles.*  
(Langworthy)

The City of Rocks stage station on the Boise-Kelton Stage Road was located here at the springs in a later era.



25. . . .to the junction of the Salt Lake and cut-off roads [the Fort Hall and Hudspeth's Cutoff roads]. It will be remembered that we left the cut-off [Sublette's Cutoff] one hundred miles [north] east of the Salt Lake valley [in present-day Wyoming]. The emigration is now all on one road. (J. Clark)

## HUDSPETH CUTOFF

Before 1849 the route to California was determined largely by the ease of the travel, the water available and the forage for the stock. The route went along Bear River Valley, Portneuf River Valley, Ross Fork Creek, Snake River Valley, Raft River (and Cassia Creek) Valley and Goose Creek valley. The only hilly places were Big Hill just west of Thomas Fork, the Portneuf-Ross Fork divide and the Goose Creek Mountains between City of Rocks and Goose Creek.

Not so in 1849. The emigration was larger than usual in response to the cry of GOLD from California and speed became an important factor. Little surprise, then, that a new route was sought. A few took the Salt Lake Cutoff.

Some Missourians, led by Benoni M. Hudspeth and guided by John J. Myers, left the established route at Soda Springs and pressed essentially westward and south-westward across the mountains and creeks to rejoin the main road again where it turned westward from Raft River near present-day Malta.

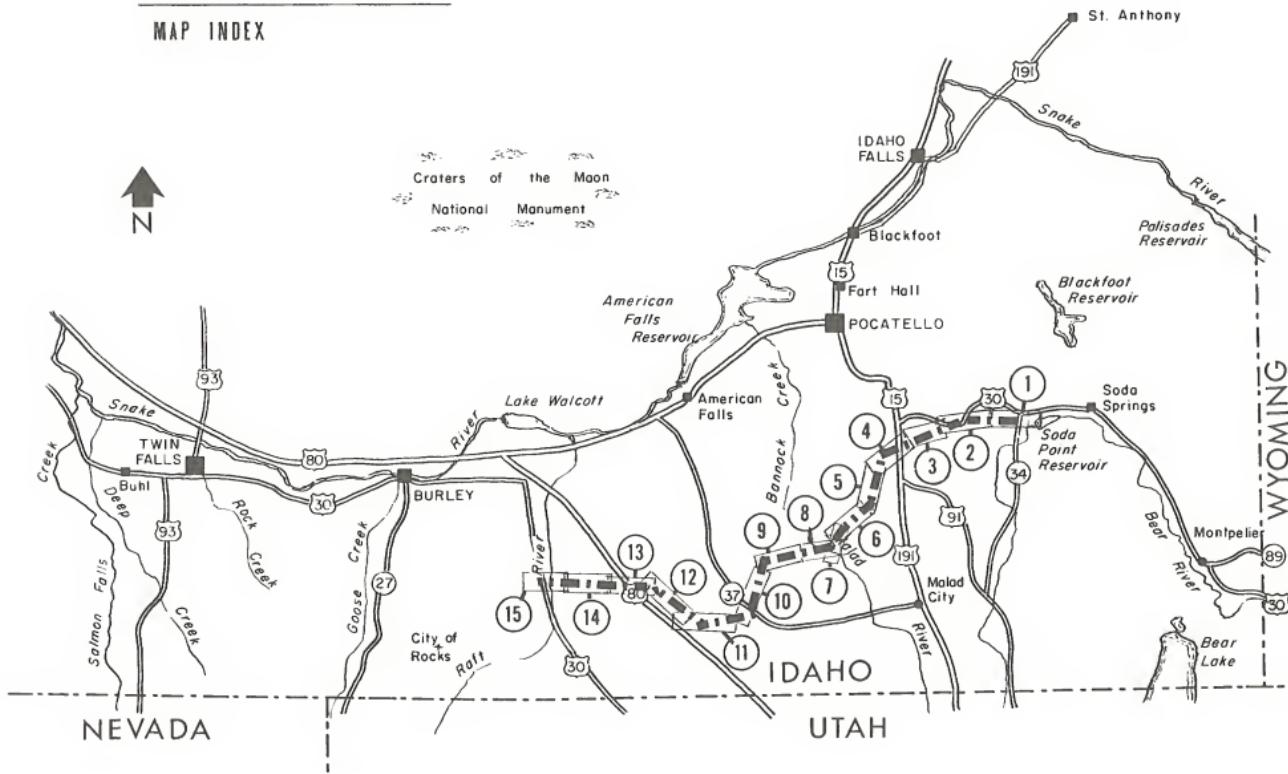
Those who followed the Hudspeth train therefore had two choices and the history of the trails tells us which was the usual one. Most of the California-bound emigrants took the route scouted out by Myers, and the route via Fort Hall was abandoned by all except a few Oregon-bound travellers. Hudspeth's Cutoff became the California Trail after that date (July 29, 1849) and continued so until 1859 when the new Lander Road, designed to conduct emigrants to California by a safer and easier route, was opened.

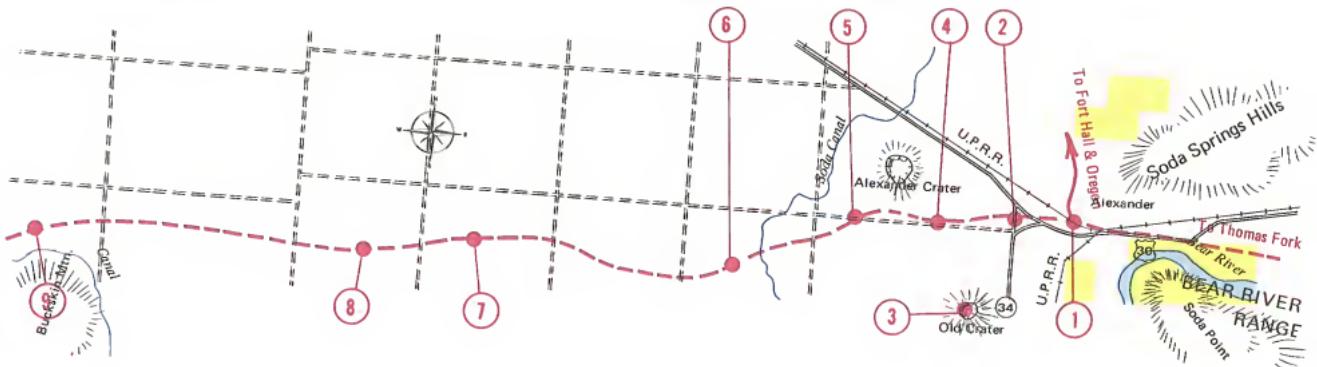
Details of this fascinating part of the road to California can be found in Stewart (1962)

# Emigrant Trails of Southeastern Idaho

## HUDSPETH'S CUTOFF

### MAP INDEX





Once departing from the established route to California the road proceeds due west across a dry lava field and, as no diary is known from the Hudspeth train, we have one from the train right behind them:

1. *July 19, 1849. . .we left the main road at the bend of the river and bore off to the South W[est] following Myers and Hedgepath [Hudspeth]. (Parke)*

The next day:

*We started on and in 4 miles came to deer hill [Soda Point]. Here the river that had been running a westerly course now ran to the south. Here we took a cutoff, which Mires, as a guide for a camp of Missourians, had entered on as a pilot, yesterday at noon, although not a wagon had been on it before that time. The travel since had worn it so it now looks like an old road of a good deal of travel. Our course now was a kind of W[estern] direction. . .(Farnham)*

and Gaylord, later, gives help to those that follow:

*One-half mile brought us to the fork of the road. The left-hand road, running straight forward across a valley of about 8 miles, is the route called Myers' cutoff, which route we travelled. The right-hand road, bearing to the north, goes by way of Fort Hall. The cutoff is said to be 60 or 70 miles nearer to California than by Fort Hall, and a better road. The traveller can easily tell when he comes to the cutoff. Bear River makes almost a square elbow southward, the Fort Hall road bearing almost due north, which is plain to be seen and the cutoff runs nearly a west course. (Gaylord)*

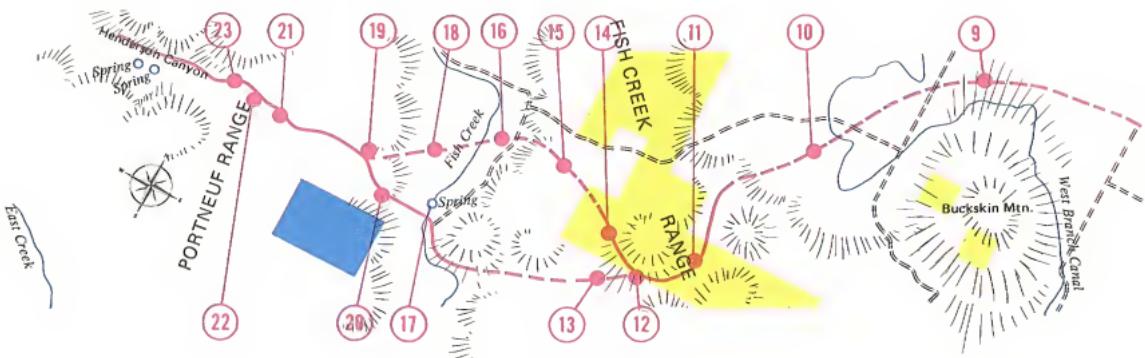
2. *The earth, as if weary under her burden, has sunk in hundreds of places. Some deep basins, others chasms 15 or 20 feet deep, 2 or 3 feet wide; this in mighty granite [basalt] I know not how deep. A plain about 8 miles wide is everywhere marked by the footprints of a mighty earthquake. One or two extinguished volcanoes are yet visible. (Banks)*



Old Crater

3. . . on arriving at the crater I ascended its mound which is forty feet above the level of the plain. Smooth outside surface which is covered with grass to its top. The E[ast] side is some 6 feet lower than the W[est], so that from the east a person has a fair view of the crater which is ten feet deep. The walls are like well arranged masouri. I descended into the . . . valley of the crater and found it covered with soil in which sage and some grass were growing. The lower part of the wall is a mass of broken lava fallen from the upper part which stands as before stated in regular layers. At one point I found the side of the orifice standing, untouched by time, just as it was when the eruptions ceased, judging from the appearance. . . The circumference of the crater at the edge of the mouth is 64 paces. Judging from the appearance of the crater it must have been in a state of eruption in some time of modern date. (Swain.)

4. . . we struck out into a wide plain, beyond which could be seen a chain of snowy mountains [Portneuf Range]. (Steele, 1850)  
*The rolling of our wagon wheels over the road produces a roar that sounded as though the earth was not two feet deep. It is very probable if emigrants would take time to explore these caverns they would make some interesting discoveries. (Pigman)*
5. The road across runs between two mounds about one mile apart. The valley is a very handsome sight to look at. (Gaylord)
6. After a slight descent in the road, it passes over interval land between the mountains. The road is excellent. . . (Child)
7. . . we started on a 16 mile stretch without water. Most of the road was level. . . (Hickman)
8. We camped in the midst of this plain, but owing to the absence of wood and water, there was a lack of the usual good cheer. (Steele, 1850)
9. . . entered a pass one mile wide between a very high sloping hill on the left [Buckskin Mountain] . . . and a number of high peaks on the right [Fish Creek Range], fourteen and a half miles from [the junction]. (Lord)



The road now enters and crosses the Fish Creek Range and comes to water:

10. . . .we began to ascend the mountains by a kind of valley lying between two lofty peaks; the ascent was long but not difficult. (Sawyer)

11. Upon reaching the summit of this depression, we found ourselves in a basin of the mountains about half a mile in diameter, surrounded by still loftier peaks covered with snow [Fish Creek Range]. These peaks apparently run up to sharp points. (Sawyer)



Entrance to Fish Creek Range ascent.  
...we ascended the hill by a gradual ascent. (Swain)

View westward across Fish Creek Basin from Fish Creek-Bear River divide.



Then, at the summit:

12. *ROAD FORKS (Child)*

Some took the left-hand road:

13. *Keep [to] the left hand [road]; the other is almost impassable in places. (Child)*

But most took the right-hand road:

14. *Here the road turns northwest half a mile, and then nearly west one and a half miles. . . (Lord)*



Descent to Fish Creek from pass.

15. *We have just passed over a considerable mountain. The view of the surroundings from which is the grandest character. Mountain after mountain in rapid succession, peak after peak towering almost to the clouds. To the west of where I am sitting is a lofty range. . . in mist. The wagons are ahead. . . plowing up dust and winding their way up hills and through valleys in the most circuitous manner. (Austin)*

Austin's first rock.

. . . I am sitting on a stone by the roadside writing my journal. . . lofty mountains surround me on every side. (Austin)



16. Descending on this side, we found a small stream [Fish Creek], probably a tributary of Reeds Creek [Marsh Creek]. The water was the coldest I ever saw flow at this season. All is now uncertainty, with regard to the route. The road having been opened this season, no written mark describes it, and none have returned to tell of its peculiarities. (Searls)



Descent to Fish Creek.

17. The basin from which the water issues is about 10 feet in diameter and a body of water of considerable size here first sees the light, . . . as cold as though off a bed of ice. . . (Perkins)

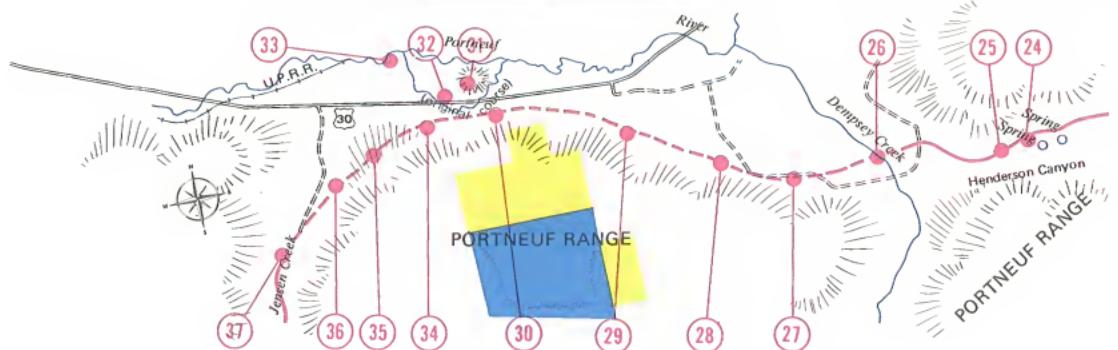
Camped at a small spring – one of the heads of the stream just spoken of [Fish Creek]. This is the first water after leaving the bend of Bear River. (Lord)



18. Crossing the brook. . .the road began the ascent of the dividing ridge between the Great Basin and the country surrounding it. These mountains were high and the roads in many places. . .precipitous. . .(Perkins)
19. Then it passes through a WET GULLY, between the hills and for half a mile is very bad. (Child)

However, Child, in his guidebook of 1850 recommends:

20. By turning short to the left, upon a new track and ascending the steep bluff, much of the worst of it can be avoided. (Child)
21. Our course from here was up a mountain for a mile by a very good road. (Bennett)
22. All the rock in this region, that lies within my approach, is fine-grained white freestone [quartzite], semivitrified into a kind of flint. I think I darn't define it so. The original reefs of strata undisturbed in the hills I will examine the first opportunity, but as far down Bear River as the Fort Hall road the hills were composed of similar [rock] but not always as white as this, often more torrified, and of a dark color [limestone]. (Middleton)
23. From the top of this mountain looking to the west down a ravine [Henderson Canyon] by which the road descends, the scenery is grand and beautiful almost beyond description. . .to the more business visitor, all interest is merged in the difficulty of the mountain pass; for it is one of the worst wagon roads I have ever seen. (Bennett)



The road passes down and out of Henderson Canyon, crosses Dempsey Creek, and enters the Portneuf River Canyon:

24. For two or three miles down a deep and dark ravine [Henderson Canyon] it goes, winding its course to a clear mountain stream [Dempsey Creek]; sometimes climbing hillsides to avoid deep ruts worn by a rivulet, having its source midway up the mountain, at others descending to the bed of the rivulet, where it is often so obstructed by jutting rocks so as to endanger at almost every step the safety of the wagons. (Bennett)
25. At the outlet of this ravine and within view of the creek to the left, is an immense pile of dark volcanic rock [limestone], thrown up full 300 feet in height, in the crevices of which hundreds of ravens and magpies were perched, croaking and chattering at us as we passed. (Bennett)

Limestone at the mouth of  
Henderson Canyon – Bennett's  
“aviary.”



26. We now crossed a fine large creek [Dempsey Creek] supposed to be a branch of the Port Neuf, an affluent of Lewis [Snake] River, which is itself the main branch of the Columbia. Thus we have left the waters of the Great Basin and reached those of the Pacific. (Sawyer)
27. After ascending the bluffs (first crossing the river), the road runs in sight of [Portneuf] river. . . (Child)
28. You will now have a smooth road for several miles, and after crossing the ridge you follow down the valley of the creek, where you may find a good camping place by turning a short distance from the road. (Steele, 1854)
29. The road thence lies along [the] slope of [the] foothills of a high ridge to [the] left., Porte Neuf [River] ½ mile to [the] right. (Wagner)
30. . . .after winding through the valley we came to a larger stream at the foot of the hill [Portneuf River], three miles from the last [Dempsey Creek]. . . This stream we think is the "Panack" River. (Parke)

In 1849, the Portneuf River here at what was called "Mouton Hill" in the fur trade days, split and ran on both sides, forming an island:

31. The hill is an island, but the stream going round the north side, although deep and gloomy, is more a lagoon than a running stream. . . rock and falls are seen on this side [i.e., the north] and I believe some water, even at the lowest stand, must run. (Middleton)



East end of "Island Hill" from the south.

32. Just below here is a thick grove of willows, and the water spreads out for a hundred yards and takes a leap down the rocks, forming a cascade, the roaring of which may be heard two miles distant. (Bennett)

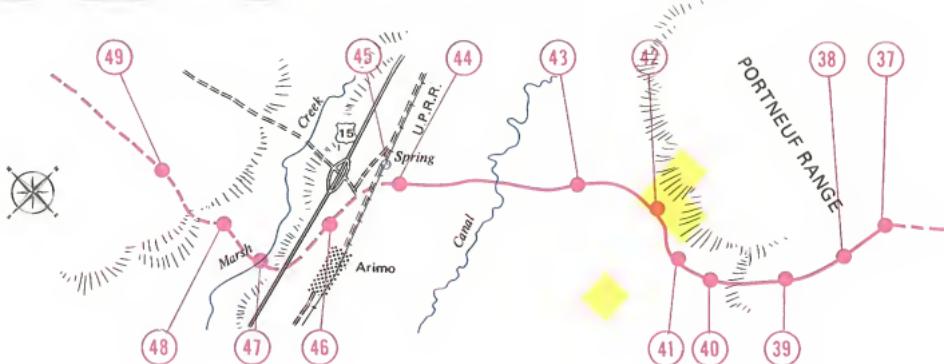


Falls of Portneuf River, west of "Island Hill," now dry because of stream diversion. "Island Hill" in background.

The hill is no longer an island, and these falls no longer are flowing, as modern day road-builders have diverted all of the water of the Portneuf River to the north channel to allow the highway to use part of the south channel.

The following falls, however, are still to be seen:

33. On the day following, I left the train and went down the [Portneuf River]. . . something like 12 miles. There is more scenery along this river than any I have ever seen. There was quite a number of falls along the river; some of them had a fall of 30 feet perpendicular. (Hickman)
34. Here the road leaves the creek [Portneuf River]. (Bennett)
35. Followed down the creek [Portneuf River] a short distance and then took to the mountains again. . . (Carpenter)
36. . . .winding along a ravine, leaving the Porto Neuf about one mile / to the right. . . (Wagner)
37. . . .we ascended another long mountainous ridge, but the ascent was easy and gradual. (McCoy)



The passage from Portneuf River to the apt-named Marsh Creek was generally uneventful—but the crossing of Marsh Creek was not.

38. We left this river and valley [Portneuf River] soon after starting. Our course was before S[outh] W[est] but now this morn[ing] it soon became due S[outh]. . . Travelled this forenoon 8 miles over an undulating or rather hilly country, mixed with some vale. (Middleton)
39. Road [is] hilly [but] not bad. (Gorgas)
40. . . we ascended by a ravine [Jensen Creek] to the red, ashy summit of a mountain. . . (Steele, 1850)
41. By a gradual descent we came down on to another stream [Marsh Creek]. (McCoy)
42. . . in a short time [the road turned] due W[est]. (Middleton)
43. . . the road winds, passing over and between hills and near high mountains. Descending to a broad valley [Marsh Creek]. . . Sedgley)
44. . . then came down to Marsh Creek, which is a small, mirey stream. The water moves very little. There is quite an expanse of bottom land. . . (Carpenter)
45. . . we reached a large pond covered with a rank growth of bull-rushes and a tall species of grass. There is a good spring here in the bank of a pond and a deep sluggish creek [Marsh Creek], 20 feet wide, running in a north course on the opposite side. (Bennett)

46. The road now follows up the stream, around a deep swamp. (Steele, 1854)

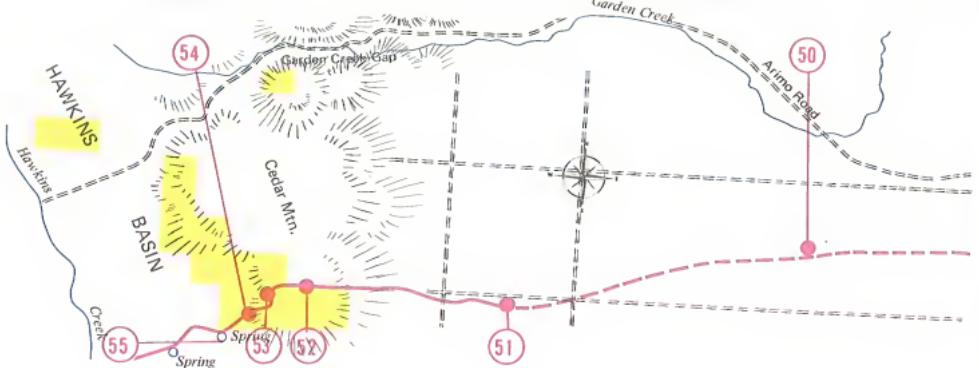
Marsh Creek swamp looking south from Interstate 15 interchange.



47. *We continued on to the south for two miles to where the creek is full of rushes, and encamped. The water of the stream is rather unpalatable, owing to the dead grass and rushes through which it passes. (Bennett)*  
*The stream is deep and the ford difficult on account of the muddy banks. (Sawyer)*

48. . . .our road, after leaving the creek, commenced raising a mountain.  
(Lewis)

49. . . .over bluffs one mile. . . (Child)



Once across Marsh Creek, the road ascends an inclined plane westward toward and into Hawkins Basin, to the west:

- 50. . . .we drove over a moderately long ascent though not bad as usual. . . (Wayman)
- 51. . . .we changed our course to due W[est] and travelled up a western slope about 4 miles when we stopped for the night, long before getting to the summit of the western slope which had been in view for the last 8 miles back. (Middleton)
- 52. . . .the road ascends an inclined plane, and then ascends a steep mountain [Cedar Mountain]. (Steele, 1854)

Some speculated about the route:

*Several miles north of the road there is a gap in the mountain, [Garden Creek Gap], its perpendicular sides in places only a few rods apart. A clear brook ripples in the shadow, and emerging from the mountain, loses itself in a deep furrow, which courses away toward the east. I could see no reason why wagons could not pass through this gap and avoid the steep mountain road. (Steele, 1850)*

But most, anxious to get to California, went on:

- 53. We arrived to [at] the summit. . . Some of the way [was] quite steep. (Lewis)



The inclined plane looking westward to Cedar Mountain from Arimo. Note Garden Gap at the notch on the horizon in the center of the picture.

*...On reaching the summit, we found the road descended immediately on the other side. (Sawyer)*

*Note the ruts on the right side of the photo, tending to the top left.*



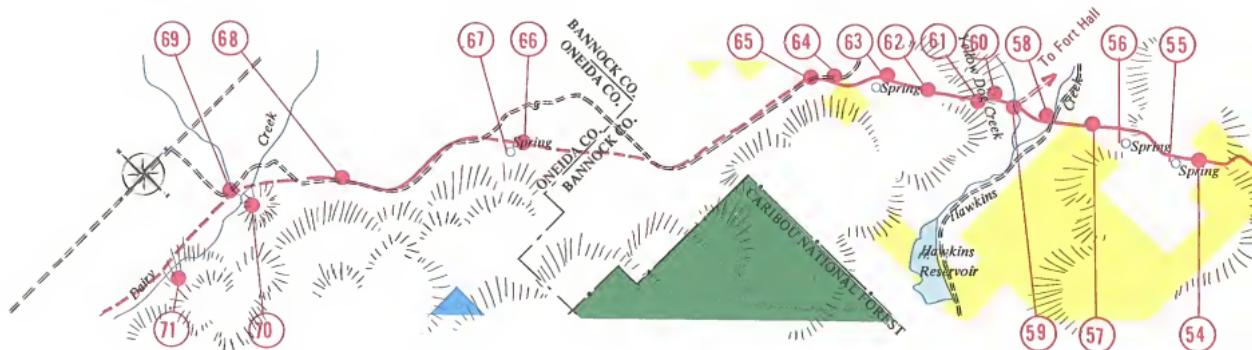


*...I see the road from the hill.  
The road travels in a large hollow,  
not more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  the  
width of the last one we left  
(Marsh Creek valley), and as-  
cending the hill on the other  
side, disappears. (Middleton)*



The spring at the base of the ridge is located in the trees in the center of the picture.

55. Descending this ridge half a mile from the summit is an excellent spring, a little to the left of the road. A little below this, where the water leaps down a rock six or eight feet, some traveller before us had amused himself in arranging a small water wheel, which was in active operation as we passed. (Bennett)



The road crosses Hawkins Basin and descends into Dairy Creek:

56. . . .after travelling down the hill half a mile farther, to the left we found another of those ever welcome springs. (Parke)
57. We descended through a ravine, at the bottom of which we found a stream of good water. (Sedgley)
58. . . .a small branch 5 feet wide and 1½ feet deep [Hawkins Creek]. (Thomasson)

Here, in Hawkins Basin, the pack trail from Salt Lake City to Fort Hall and Hudspeth's Cutoff had a junction. The trail joins the Fort Hall road at the Portneuf River, to the north:

59. We met a small company of traders here from Salt Lake and bound for Fort Hall by a blind trail turning to the right [up Hawkins Creek]. The Salt Lake road enters the cutoff road 15 miles ahead [on the Little Malad River]. (Bennett)
60. Half a mile from here [Hawkins Creek] is another small creek [Yellow Dog Creek], where we encamped. Both these streams run to the south and no doubt empty into the one we left this morning [Marsh Creek]. (Bennett)
61. After crossing [Hawkins and Yellow Dog] creek, the road turns to left. . . (Wagner)
62. In a short distance we came to a very steep short hill. . . (Middleton)

63. . . .pass up the north side of a dry slew which runs to the [northeast]. (Middleton)

64. [The road] winds through a hollow enclosed by marble bluffs [quartzite]. . . (Wagner)

65.

. . .the roads [are] very mountainous . . .walked ahead of the [wagon] train; rested on a large rock of fine white marble [quartzite] under some cedar trees. (Austin)



66. From the summit. . .the surface slopes gradually toward the southwest and widens into a broad basin [Dairy Creek valley]. (Sawyer)

67. . . .came [to] a little small spring to the left of the road. . . (Thomasson)

This summit, between Hawkins and Dairy Creeks, was so gentle it was easy to see why Farnham noted:

68. . . as we travelled over the new road [opened the day before, by Hudspeth and Myers, whose train was a short distance ahead], we could not help but admire it. It seemed so well to avoid the steep pitches and the places it went through the hills seemed to be the only practical ones. (Farnham)

and Bennett said:

. . .the road was principally descending over a rolling country to a creek [Dairy Creek]. (Bennett)

69. . . .you come to WILLOW CREEK [Dairy Creek]. Two crossings within one quarter of a mile. (Child)

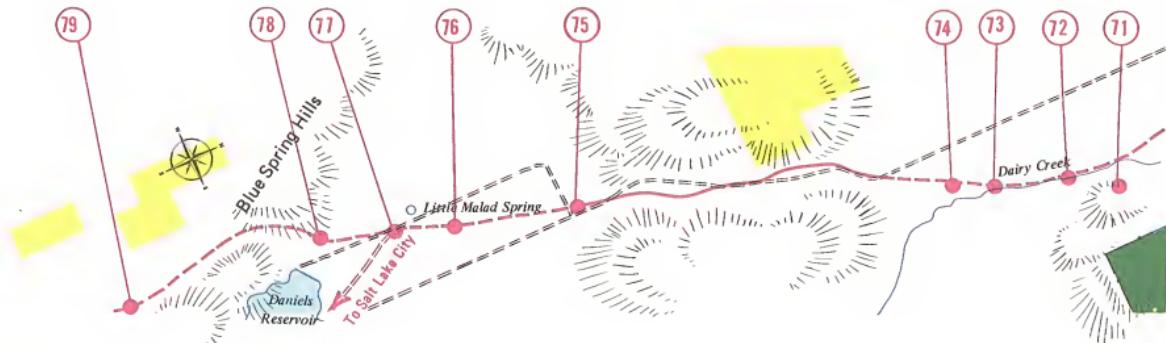
70. The road is seen from a hill on the side of this creek [Dairy Creek] slanting across the valley to the S[outh] W[est] leaving the creek to the S[outh] E[ast]. (Middleton)

71. . . I ascended a high hill on the east side [of Dairy Creek] close to the creek. . . I could not ascertain distinctly which course the creek took at a distance from me, nor can I be certain where this creek runs into, viz., the Oregon, Salt Lake, or Mary [Humboldt] River, but I will keep the best lookout I can. On both sides and on the top of the hill I saw enormous blocks of rock, some argillaceous, some sand – coated in the highest degree [basalt] and the original streaks in some of them twisted and contorted like the gnarly knob of arbor vitae or mahogany.

Some-one in particular had a large oblong ball-like cavity in it that I could have crept into and coiled up very easily. . . All over the plain before I came to the hilltop I saw fragments. . . of very beautiful and pure specimens of black bottle glass [obsidian], some of which I also found on the top of the hill, which was 460 feet high. . . On the N[orth]-W[est] corner of this hill there is an elevated clump of disjointed rock, like an imposing watchtower; on approaching to them they possess a great deal of the columnar basaltic character; they are composed of sand, and. . . baked into rock. I stood on the highest part of them. (Middleton)

The basalt-strewn slope, watchtower and cave along the east side of Dairy Creek camp-ground.





The travellers had a well-watered, level road down Dairy Creek and over the gentle divide to Little Malad River:

- 72. . . camped one mile from where we crossed [Dairy Creek]. . . The country is mountainous and broken but some parts have a good soil. . . (Lewis)
- 73. Travel near the creek for one mile and a half. (Child)
- 74. We travelled some two miles farther and encamped in a valley to the right of the road. (Sawyer)
- 75. . . we continued across the ridges, or spurs, now between parallel ranges of timberless mountains. . . (Steele, 1850)

View south from Dairy Creek Valley toward Little Malad Valley.



76. . . .there were two tracks, one leading to the right [to the spring] and the other crossing the creek [Little Malad River] half a mile below the spring. (Dutton)

Most travellers commented on the spring:

. . .the largest spring we have seen on the journey [Little Malad Spring]. It is about 1 foot deep, very clear, and covers about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an acre of ground. It supplies quite a large stream of water [Little Malad River]. (Batchelder)

77. . . .descended into the valley of a large creek [Little Malad River], along which we followed for about a mile, and bearing up against the mountain side, rounded a long spur. . . (Steele, 1850)

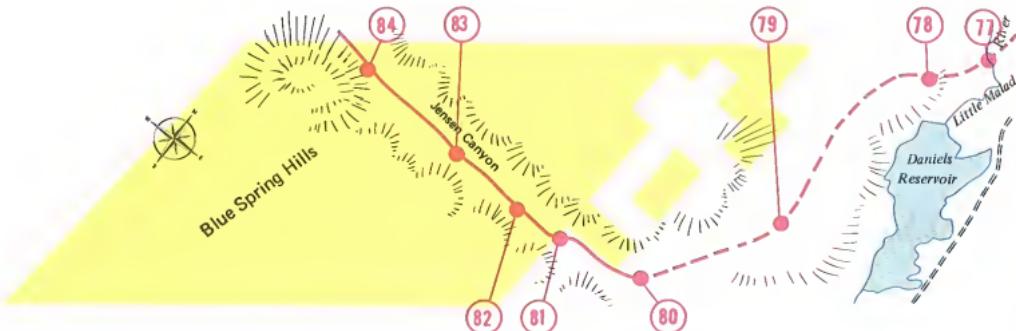
It is here that the useful diary of Bennett tells us:

The Salt Lake road takes down this valley [southward] and the cutoff bears more to the west over a range of mountains [Blue Spring Hills]. (Bennett)

But, continuing on Hudspeth's Cutoff:

78. The road, after leaving Clear Stream [Little Malad River] rises into the bluff. . . (Gorgas)

79. . . .crossing the mountain ridge for a few miles. . . (Burbank)



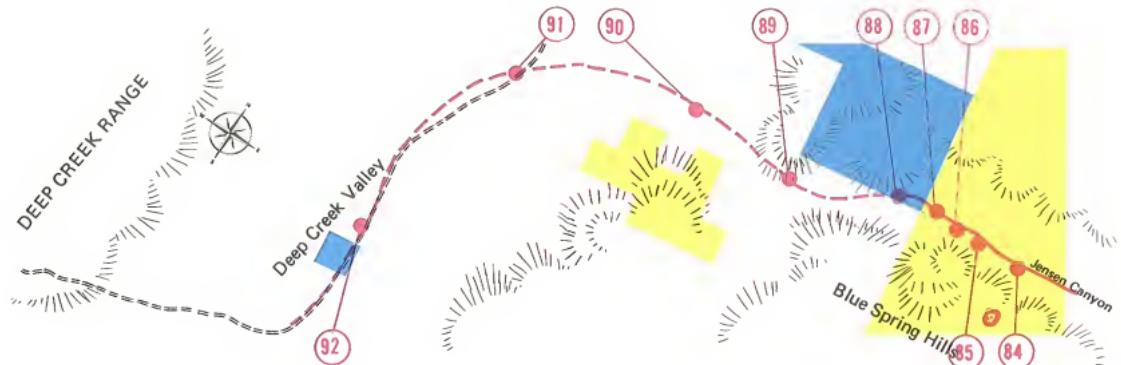
The road now turns westward into the Blue Spring Hills which gave the travellers little warning of the trouble ahead.

80. *The road then passed over two long hills and turned to the right, making a circuit around the mountains to avoid the high ranges. (Sedgley)*
81. *. . . we turned [North] West into a narrow defile [Sublett Canyon] between high mountain ridges. . . (Patterson)*
82. *Pass through [a] deep ravine gradually rising to the summit. . . (Green)*  
*The ascent is so gradual, so much that the traveller hardly perceives any. We called this the Immigrants Pass [Sublett Canyon]. It seemed that nature had constructed this inclined plain expressly for the benefit of us poor mortals. . . (Ingalls)*
83. *The road lay through a deep and narrow ravine, with very high and precipitous mountains on both sides. The great portion of the way through the ravine, the precipices on each side approached so near as to leave barely room enough for a single wagon track. (Sawyer)*
84. *. . . the almost perpendicular sides [were] dry and verdureless. (Steele, 1850)*

The ascent up Sublett Canyon in the Blue Spring Hills, looking eastward. The trail is in the foreground, and now grown over from disuse.







From the summit of the Blue Spring Hills, the spectacular descent is a landmark in all the diaries, to say nothing of the disappointment at finding no water at the bottom.

85. *It was high time to camp when we were at the top of this but there was no water here and we, not knowing but we should find plenty of water, had [not] furnished ourselves with any. (Farnham)*

*The descent was probably 1000 feet within the first mile, steeper than the roof of a house... we lock our hind wheels and slide down a thousand feet, over rocks and through gullies. (Ingalls)*



86. . . .but if Dame Nature was moved by any such kindly feelings towards us when she was engaged on this excellent road [of the ascent], she must have got sadly miffed when she got it completed to the top of the mountain, for we had one of the most tremendous descents to make on the other side, that we have had on the journey. (Ingalls)

87. Here we find the worst hill to get down we have seen yet. It is very steep. We have to let our wagons down with ropes; the road winds down through a narrow crevice just wide enough for wagons to go; it is so steep on each side that wagons cannot turn over. It is 1½ miles long. (Thomasson)

*It is said of an ancient Spartan that he commenced by lifting a kid, and by continuing to add weight, soon got so that he could lift an ox. This is somewhat the case with us; when we commenced our journey, trifling hills were considered great obstacles, but now we lock our hind wheels and slide down a thousand feet, over rocks and through gullies, with as much sang froid as a schoolboy would slide down a snow bank.*

(Ingalls)

88. From [Diary Creek] to the south [i.e., west] end of the [descent] is 12 miles that we have travelled today. . . (Middleton)

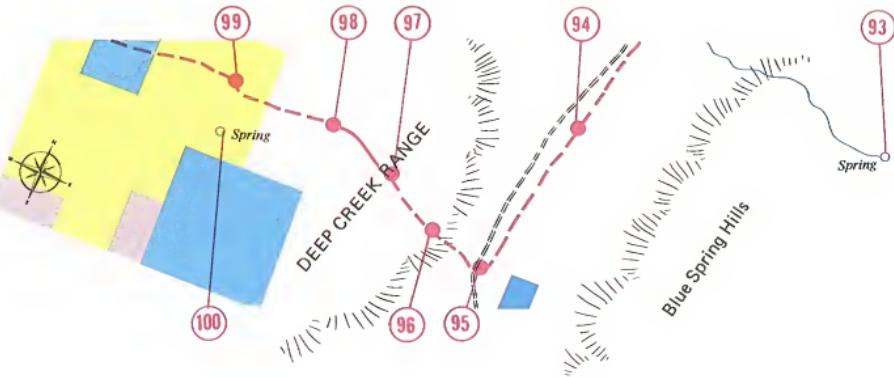
89. The road here seems to turn a little to the [north] one mile, then sweeps round a hilly bottom in a valley to the west [south]. (Middleton)

90. One mile north of this turn the rim of the Great Basin crosses the valley, which is here some 4 or 5 miles wide and extending north until it sinks out of sight, 2/3 of the right side being occupied by the mountain in the distance. (Lord)

91. We expected to find water at the foot of this mountain, but were disappointed. . . (Sedgley)

Depending upon the time of the day that the travellers arrived in Deep Creek Valley, if daylight they may see the faint signs to water on the hillside to the left:

92. We had to leave the road three-quarters of a mile to the left [Petit Spring]. This [spring] was discovered this year [1850], and formerly it was 20 miles [to water]. (Dutton)



With the exception of the few who arrived in Deep Creek Valley during daylight and found water, most of the travellers had a long, hot, dry drive over still more mountains, the Deep Creek Range.

A few found the water:

93. . . .went two miles up in the mountains in search of water. Some of our men found a small spring of good water [and] though we were told the point near which it was, it was difficult to find. (Banks)

But most did not:

94. We reached the bottom of the mountain just before sunset, traversed a small valley, 4 miles, /with/ no water in it. . . (Swain)

Some went far afield:

95. Went down the valley about four miles to where it [the road] turned west over the mountains; we unyoked the cattle and drove them in a southeast direction to a spring of water [location uncertain but probably Sheep Canyon]. (Smith)

The road turned west here, but we have very few descriptions of this passage because most of the travellers were on it at night, having found no water to camp at in Deep Creek Valley:

96. . . .we commenced the ascent of a low mountain by another beautiful road and pass. . . (Swain)

97. Then we took to the west hills and through ravines, but none of the road was either hard or very steep. (Middleton)

98. . . .we ascended another ridge through a ravine, or hollow. . . (McCoy)

99. . . and by a very gradual ascent in 4 miles we reached the summit of a very high hill [Deep Creek Range]. The ascent due west is tolerably good and easy over small elevations. . . (Lord)

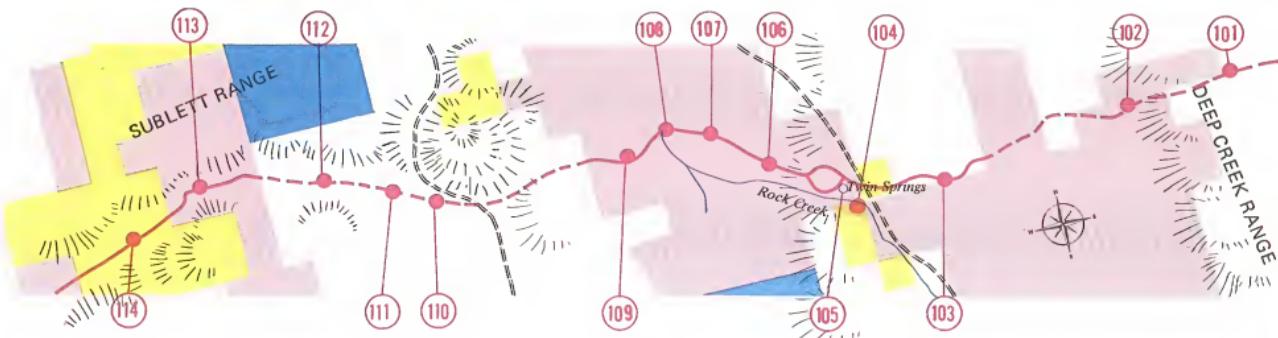
*Our road lay over the mountains. . . We travelled fast and well until noon without seeing any water. . . and [camped] at the top of a hill with barely enough water left in our canteens to quench our thirst. (Perkins)*

Many of the summer travellers of 1850 reported snow along the route so that the winter before must have been severe, but good for springs. Only two known travellers found water in the Deep Creek passage, one of whom says:

100. . . we ascended the mountain through a defile, at the summit of which we found water on the hill side half a mile from the road. (Patterson)



Deep Creek Range summit, looking East. Most of the travellers came up this slope at night. Blue Spring Hills in background.



After passing over 22 miles since the last certain water, the road passes Twin Springs and continues west into the Sublett Range:

101. . . commenced the descent by a very gradual slope and after driving in the dark and through clouds of dust which we do all the time. . .  
(Swain)

102. . . we crossed some dusty ridges, and passed down the dry bed of a water course [Bull Canyon Creek]. (Steele, 1850)

103. We found the road tolerably good but very dusty. (Lewis)

At last! Water:

104. [Came] to a small green flat where two brooks united. (Steele, 1850)

Deep Creek Range summit,  
from the west.



*Encamped. . .in full view of the thirsty mortals rushing down to water.  
(Banks)*

105. . .I found several excellent and copious springs of pure water close to the creek. . .two of which cannot be excelled [Twin Springs]. (Middleton)

. . .reached a fine clear spring twenty four miles from Clear Stream [Little Malad River], this making our drive forty miles today. We reached [Twin] springs at nine o'clock at night. (Gorgas)

106. After leaving Spring Valley [Twin Springs area] for the first half mile there is some rather steep hills. . .the road becoming easy and due west as it was before we came to Spring Valley [Twin Springs area]. (Middleton)

107. . .we crossed a high hill. . . (Patterson)

108. . .travelled up a long hill and took tea. . . (Sedgley)

109. The road from [Twin Springs] is west. . .making a detour northward around the head of a ravine. . . (Lord)

110. . .crossing to the north side of the rim of the Great Basin again. . . (Lord)

111. . .and wound down through small mountains. (Thomasson)

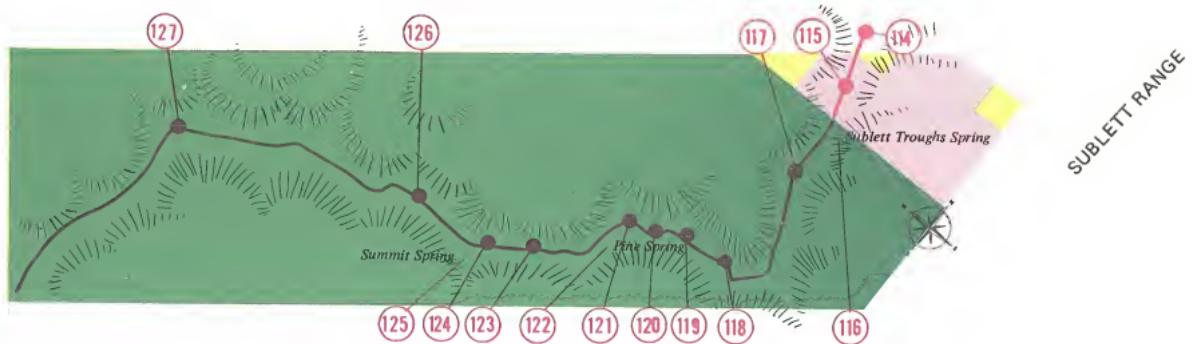
112. Four miles of the road was hilly. (Sedgley)

113. . .we struck another pass or defile winding among the hills, [Sublett Range] rising gradually and smooth and clear of stone. No art could make a better one. (Swain)

114. The road then winds up a ravine. (Steele, 1854)

Twin Springs. The spring is in the right center of the picture, behind the bush.





Here the road is engulfed entirely in the canyons of the Sublett Range. No one complained of this well-watered passage:

115. *We had some (hard) pulling and nearly one mile through a deep groove between hills similar to that of the [Sublett Canyon in the Blue Spring Hills] in the expanded part of which we camped at the spring [Sublett Troughs Spring]... (Middleton)*

116. . . .up a ravine a little to the left of the road. (Bennett)

*A small spring in a mountain ravine [Sublett Troughs Spring] (Burbank)*



117. . .the road was gradual and smooth. (Hayden)

118. . .passed through a long, narrow, and deep defile to a sudden bend in the road to the north. . .(Patterson)

119. We travelled up a gradual ascent for several miles... .(Thomasson)



Divide in Sublett Mountains.  
This was a gradual ascent and  
then a gradual descent.

The traveller, Dr. Isaac Lord, was very conscious of the drainage of the region. He is in error here, however. They are on the divide between Sublett Troughs Spring and Pine Spring drainage, both leading to the Snake River.

120. A short distance. . .west, you reach the rim of the [Great] basin. . .  
(Lord)

121. From the rim of the basin [summit between Sublett Troughs Spring and Pine Spring] there is a sharp descent southwest. . .(Lord)

122. . .the road ran by a mountain that was covered with cedar and quaking aspen trees. At the base of the mountain is a very fine spring [Pine Spring]. (Carpenter)

123. . .traveling up a mountain with a gradual ascent in a ravine. . .  
(Batchelder)

124. In about three miles, our chasm-like ravine led us to the summit of the mountain. . .below yawned innumerable ravines and pinnacles, toward the west, a huge mountain raised its snowy dome in the sky. This I recognize as Pilot Peak [Cache Peak] at the head of the Raft River [in the Albion Range] which has been described to me by the mountaineer Baker. (Steele, 1850)

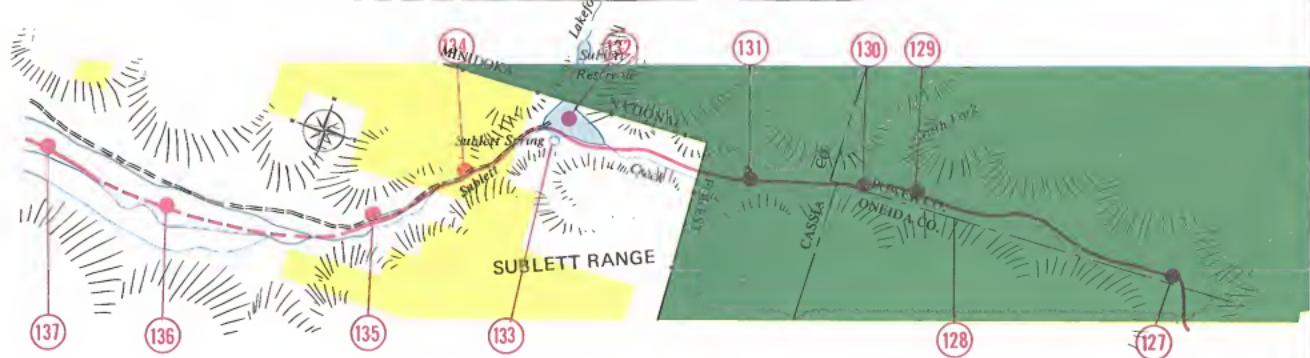
125. Where the road begins the descent, a large, pine-shaded spring flows from beneath a rock [Summit Spring]. (Steele, 1850)

126. . .the height of the hills was left behind and the road began to descend a defile winding gradually among the hills. We found two good springs this afternoon [Pine and Summit Springs]. (Swain)

127.

. . .In a gap of the mountains grandly curved, the traveller sees a grand amphitheater formed by a large mountain gracefully rising behind, at the foot of which stand five or six pine trees. (Banks)





The road continues its passage through the well-watered Sublett Range, turning westward toward the Raft River Valley:

128. After travelling. . . a narrow gorge in the mountains we encamped. . . by the side of a spring of pure water [Sublett Spring]. (Batchelder)
129. . . we saw the moon rise and set in about half an hour, the walls of the mountains to the south and southwest rise to a height sufficient, nearly perpendicular, and directly from our camp, causing the effect. (Batchelder)
130.  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from the last spring. . . is a very bad, small muddy creek [North Fork, Sublett Creek] to cross. . . This trifling muddy creek enters the defile from the north and joins the little branch [Sublett Creek] which comes from the spring [Sublett Spring] . . . and both run down the defile to the west. (Middleton)
131. We have travelled all day in the gorge of a mountain and have not got out, nor seen out, yet. (Granville County Company)
132. Next came to Muddy Creek [Lake Fork, Sublett Creek]  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles. This was. . . bad to cross, and empties into the branch of the Raft River [Sublett Creek]. We found good bottom, all gravel below, above 2 feet deep on the edge going in and about 6 feet wide. If we had kept down to the left, we could have crossed it and not wet the spokes half. (Turnbull)

Independence Peak from Sublett Canyon above present reservoir, looking southwest, taken from Hudspeth's Cutoff.



133. . . .on the other side, at the foot of the hill is an excellent clear spring of water. . . The strata of rock [outcrop] on the face of the hills for the last two miles in places, and stand at about 30 degrees from the perpendicular, running from N[orth] W[est] to S[outh] E[ast], the dip to the S[outh] W[est]. The rock seems to be argillaceous and is burnt, apparently as hard as flint [cherty limestone]. (Middleton)

134. The road, till it emerges from the ravine into the valley, crosses the extreme points of several spurs only a few feet elevated and sometimes not more than one or two feet above the stream [Sublett Creek]. (Lord)

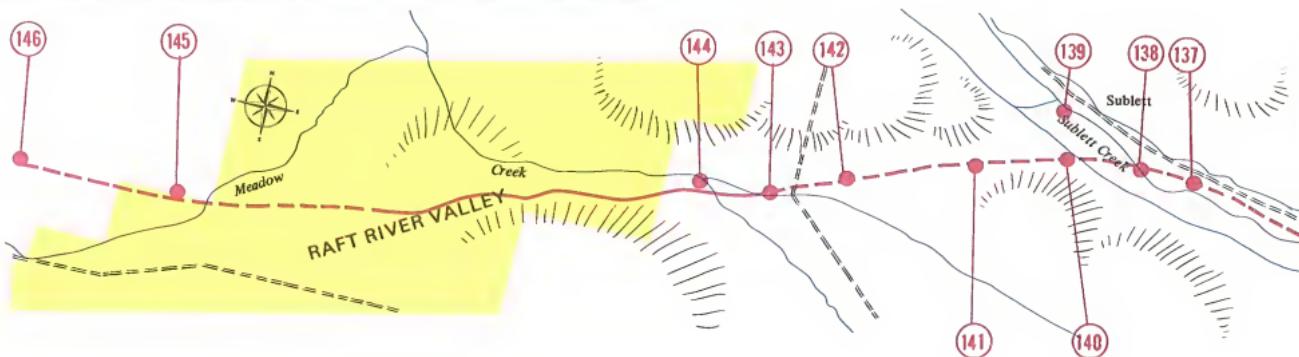
135. . . .after travelling three miles down the rivulet [Sublett Creek], which we crossed several times, we arrived at the mouth of the pass. The distance through I have set down at 15 miles. In this distance there are several good springs. . . In this pass may be seen again some of those beautiful mountain views I have remarked in other places. (Bennett)

136. . . W[est] S[outh] W[est] 3½ miles. . . The last 3½ miles [are] through a broad handsome valley. The creek still on the left side. (Lord)

137. . . .we have been following down a stream [Sublett Creek] for about 6 miles [from Sublett Spring] and it is sinking very fast as it is not large now as when we struck it. (Badman)



Mt. Harrison, west of Raft River Valley in Albion Range, from Sublett Creek where it leaves the canyon, looking west. Trail was in wheat field, left center.



Leaving Sublett Canyon where the creek sinks into the desert, the travellers cross the then-barren Raft River Valley, heading for the junction with the California Trail:

138. After travelling three miles west, we get out of the termination of this ravine and cross the creek that runs down it [Sublett Creek]. The creek runs west and we cross it in a South West direction. .(Middleton)

The sink varied from season to season, depending upon the amount of water in the creek:

139. . .the water sinks into the ground just as it reaches the track. (Lord)

140. We ascend . .a hill left of the creek, from which a large valley lying between Salt Lake and Snake River lay between us and the mountains to the west of the valley at the foot of which appeared to be a large stream of water [Raft River]. (Swain)

141. The road here strikes out over a barren plain, leaving the creek. There is no more water for 14 miles, so we took a pailfull for each horse. (Shepherd)

142. After getting a little ways into this everything assumed a most arid appearance. The cobblestones has a burnt appearance and the air was filled with a cloud of white dust. (Farnham)

Black Pine Mountains from the north. Trail runs across picture in the wheat field.

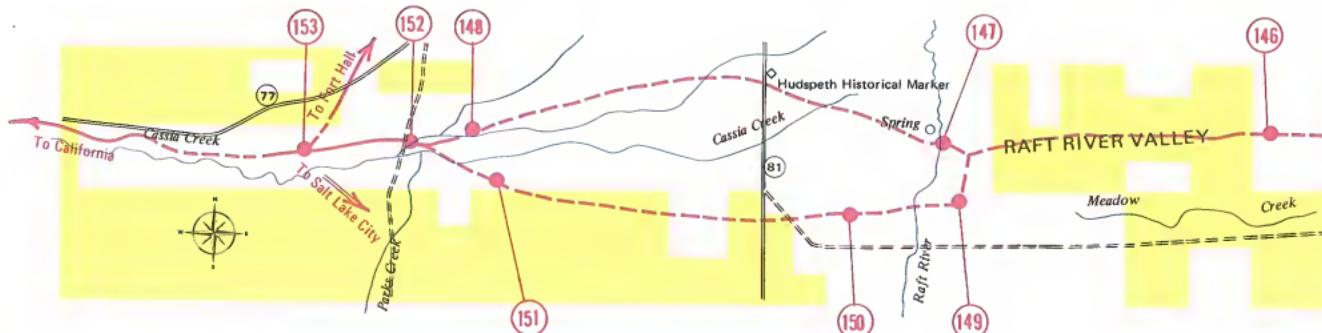


143. . . .then {the road} descends to a lower [level] {Meadow Creek valley},  
. . . runs 8½ miles W[est] S[outh] W[est]. . . (Lord)

144. A long line of willows through the center of this plain. . . marked the  
outline of a stream {Raft River}. . . Our road was good and we  
travelled fast. . . (Steele, 1850)

145. A large mountain on our left about 3 miles distant {Black Pine Range}  
overlooks the Salt Lake; it is some 30 or 40 miles {distant}. . . The  
plain over which we travelled is a desert. (Banks)

146. Our trail today lay through a wild waste. (Lewis)



The road crosses Raft River and continues westward to join the California Trail.

147. . . you strike the [Raft] river. . . It is both deep [and] dirty, and bad crossing. . .(Woodward)

During times of drought or low water, Raft River would be dry and the Pierce Spring, just to the west of the river, would be flowing and be the stopping place:

*The plains, which appeared to be 3 or 4 miles across, proved to be 16, and the stream nothing but a grayish appearance of the air across so level a plain. We found, however, a good spring brook [Pierce Spring]. (Swain)*

Pierce Spring is now dry as the water level in Raft River Valley has been lowered due to irrigation pumping. Usually both Raft River and Pierce Spring were flowing and the crossing was difficult:

*In the space of one mile, the road crosses three more creeks, which I shall call mud creeks, they being very muddy and hard to cross. (Shepherd)*

Once across Raft River, most of the travellers encountered tributary branches of Cassia Creek, en route to the ford of Cassia Creek:

148. *The road crosses the creek [Raft River] and follows up a valley, crossing in five miles, several spring branches [tributaries of Cassia Creek]. (Marcy)*

However, some travellers wished to avoid the troublesome wet passage and, upon arriving at Raft River, turned southward:

149. *Leaving the main road, we turned to the left, and going up the stream half a mile made camp on the east branch of Raft River. (Carpenter)*

This route is identified in the diaries because those who took it had a dry run from Raft River to Cassia Creek:

150. *After crossing [Raft River] you will have to cross two deep sloughs. The road is then on an ashy plain. (Steele, 1854)*

151. *A fine small creek comes and meets us from the west [Cassia Creek]. It runs on our north side to the east and after entering the valley, takes a north course. (Middleton)*

Then, both routes cross Cassia Creek at the same ford:

152. *6 miles [from Raft River] brought us to another creek [Cassia Creek], 12 feet across it and 1 foot deep; current very quick. . . We are near where this trail intersects the Fort Hall road. (Lewis)*

*Here, opposite the ford which is evidently one not much used this year [1850], a trail comes down over the bluff which we suppose to be the road from Fort Hall. (Gorgas)*

And then Hudspeth's Cutoff ends:

153. *. . . we struck the Fort Hall trail, but few teams have come that way [1850]. We came the cutoff in 5 days, distance 128 miles. There was some horse teams came round by Fort Hall. It took them 5½ days, so the difference is not much. (Christy)*

*We have now completed the journey of Hedspeth's [Hudspeth's] Cutoff, and this evening the camp fires that slimmer far down the valley of Raft River show the line of the old Fort Hall road, which follows up the west side. . .(Steele, 1850).*

where we are now lying with the forces.  
Camping ground since we have been on  
the road; good water & splendid grass,  
fed for burns, & told by John Intire  
Th 23 in camp with nothing doing  
I made a pr suspenders & splinted whip-lash  
325' This Mon I assisted Dr. W. in  
Cooking & made my first bread, &  
had good luck & turned out 3 light  
rice loaves! afternoon, attended the  
Co. Meeting & learned the Agents & their  
actions reported to the co. was affiant  
one of the Com. to consider this report  
Not in com. to appoint the Co. & called  
for rapid reports & vouchers.  
after which I took the spent the remainder  
of the afternoon & evening in writing  
letter to my wife, to send to California.

by John who packs in the morning  
here by hoping to send letter home in  
advance of my arrival there 3 weeks  
at 25 Dose early this morn & got all  
ready for camping, John packed in  
horse & boards fresh over we left at  
5 o'clock & walked up the valley of the  
branch of the O River which leads into  
the Mo. directly west - 3 M. from camp  
just where the stream issues from the  
Mt. the H. & all road comes with the  
cutoff & the road from Salt-Lake to  
Ogden. The Valley of the little stream  
is narrow, the creek bottoms has good few  
the creek is lined with water willow & the  
bluffs very high. having the appearance  
of being iron ore & the ledges where they  
can be seen are dipping in every direction

Department of the Interior  
Pacific Wagon Roads.

## PRELIMINARY MAP

of the

Central Division

Ft. Kearney South Pass & Honey Lake

# W A G O N - R O A D

Surveyed and worked under the Direction of

F. W. LANDER, Supt.

by

W. H. WAGNER, Engr.

1857-58

*F. W. Lander  
Supt. 1857-58*

BOUNDARY between UTAH and OREGON

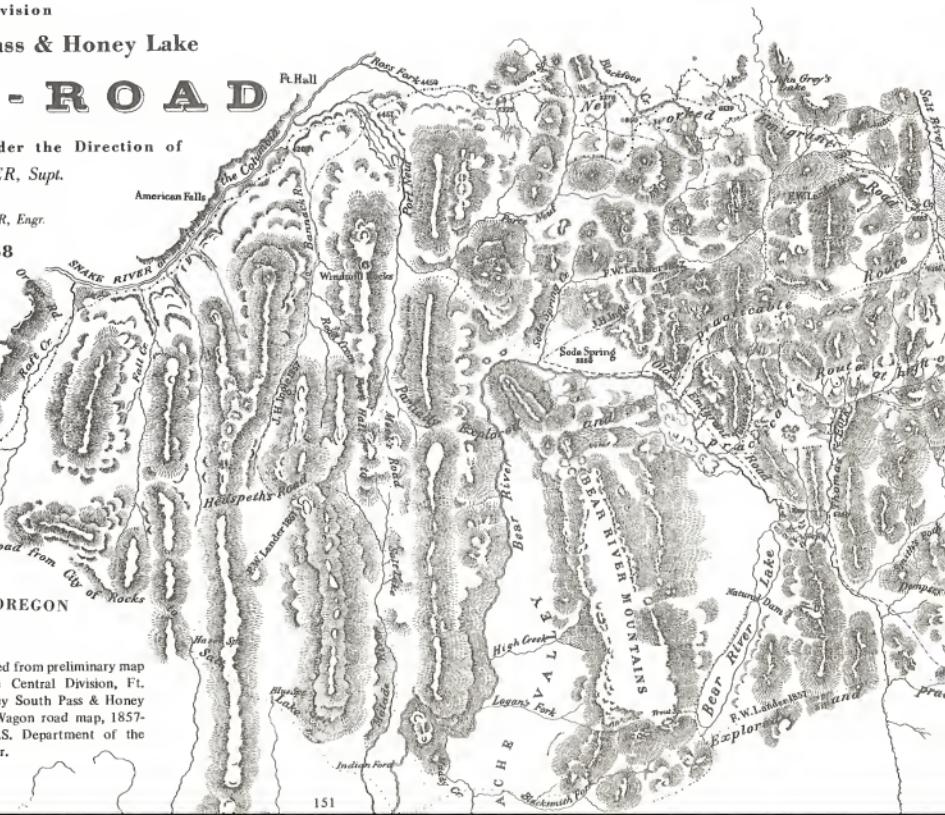
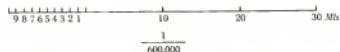
### ROUTES

Surveyed and re-committed  
by

F. W. Lander 1857  
J. F. Milloway — — —  
J. H. Ingles — — —  
R. F. Franklin — — —  
W. H. Wagner \* \* \* \* \*  
F. W. Lander 1858

Adapted from preliminary map  
of the Central Division, Ft.  
Kearney South Pass & Honey  
Lake Wagon road map, 1857-  
58. U.S. Department of the  
Interior.

Scale



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## MAPS

The following Idaho topographic maps were used in plotting the routes of the emigrant trails in southeastern Idaho. They are in the order that the travellers would have encountered them. All are published by the U.S. Geological Survey, Denver Federal Center, Denver, and all are at a scale of 1:24,000 except those marked with an asterisk (\*) which are at a scale of 1:62,500. Those marked with two asterisks (\*\*\*) have not been published at the time of this compilation. The names used are the field edition names used in the preparation stage.

All those of Oregon Trail leading to

- \* Yale (junction of California and Oregon Trails)
- \* Lake Walcott (second crossing of Raft River)
- Malta NE (junction of Salt Lake City to Oregon trail)
- Malta (third crossing of Raft River)
- Nibbs Creek (junction of California Trail and Hudspeth's Cutoff, and junction of California Trail with Salt Lake City to Oregon Trail)

Conner Ridge

Elba (Raft River-Cassia Creek divide)

Jim Sage Canyon (Edwards Creek)

Almo (City of Rocks, and junction of California Trail and Salt Lake Cutoff)

Lyman Pass (Junction Creek)

- \* Cotton Thomas Basin (Granite Pass)

Blue Hill (Goose Creek)

SALT LAKE CUTOFF:

- \* Park Valley (Clear Creek crossing, and entrance to Idaho)
- Naf
- Border (Thomas Fork junction with Bear River)
- Montpelier Canyon (exit from "Big Hill")
- Pegram (Big Timber, Pegleg Smith's trading post)
- Dingle

Montpelier (Montpelier Creek)

Georgetown

Nounan (Georgetown Spring)

Fossil Canyon

- \* Soda Springs (Soda Springs and junction of Oregon Trail and Hudspeth's Cutoff)
- \* Bancroft (volcanic lava field)
- \* Portneuf (Soda Pool)

Jeff Cabin Creek (Bear River-Snake River divide, head of Ross Fork)  
South Putnam Mountain (Narrows of Ross Fork Creek)

- \* Yandell Springs

Buckskin Basin

Fort Hall (entrance onto Snake River Plain)

Pingree (entrance onto Fort Hall bottoms)

Springfield (site of old Fort Hall)

Schiller

Wheatgrass Bench

American Falls (American Falls of Snake River)

American Falls SW

Neeley

- \* Yale (junction of Oregon and California trails)

- \* Lake Walcott

Rupert SE (Marsh Creek)

Rupert SW

Burley SE (Goose Creek)

Burley SW

Milner (Clappine's rocks)

Milner Butte

Murtaugh (Dry Creek)

Stricker Butte (Rock Creek)

Hub Butte

Twin Falls (Rock Creek crossing)

Filer

Jerome

Niagra Springs (Crystal Springs overlook)

Thosand Springs (Kanaka Rapids and Salmon Falls Creek)

Chokecherry Canyon (Narrows of Raft River)

Jim Sage Canyon (second and third crossings of Raft River)

Almo (Emigrant Canyon and junction with the California Trail)

#### HUDSPETH'S CUTOFF:

\* Soda Springs (junction of Oregon Trail and Hudspeth's Cutoff)

\* Bancroft (Fish Creek)

Lava Hot Spring (Portneuf River)

Arimo (Marsh Creek)

Hawkins (Hawkins Basin and Hawkins Creek)

Dairy Creek

Daniels (Little Malad Spring)

\*\* Stone 1 SE (descent from Sublett Canyon)

\*\* Stone 1 SW

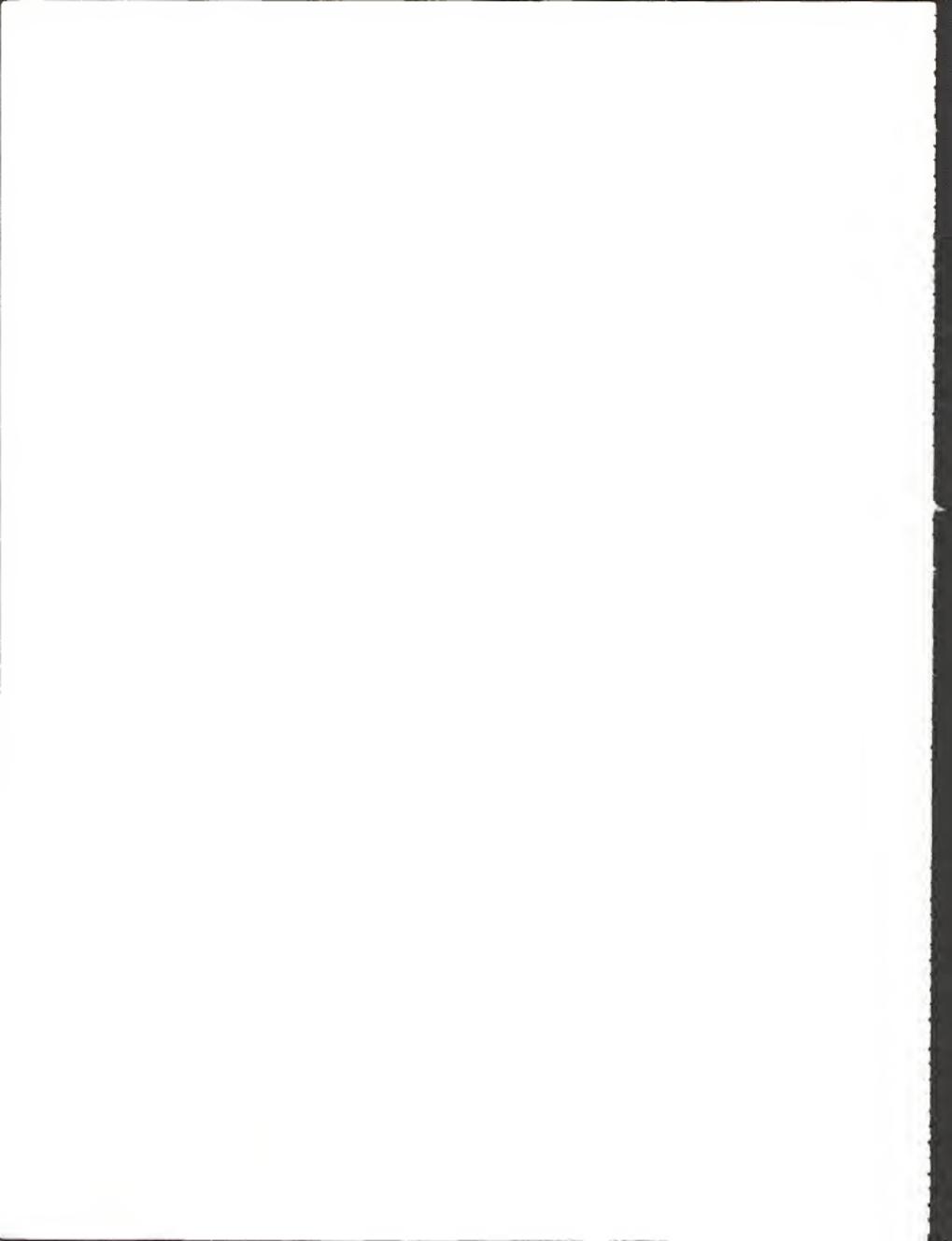
\*\* Stone 2 SE (Twin Springs)

\*\* Stone 2 SW (Sublett Creek)

\* Sublett

Malta (Raft River)

Nibbs Creek (junction with California Trail)



BACK COVER:  
Shoshone Falls on  
the Snake River

